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PREFACE.

THIS outline of the campaigns which took place in Egypt, Sinai and the Western Desert in 1914, 1915 and 1916, Palestine in 1917, and which culminated in Syria and Cilicia in 1918, presents the main features only of those campaigns, and their relation to the events in adjoining theatres of operations. Originally, it was prepared as a course of lectures for the Staff College, Camberley ; and in response to numerous requests it is now re-drafted and published in the hope that it will serve as a concise narrative of an interesting and progressive series of campaigns. Most of the maps and plates, compiled from official sources, were printed by the Ordnance Survey for that course of lectures and have been reproduced for this book with the kind permission of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office.

I am grateful to many brother officers for their helpful suggestions, and particularly to Major-General G. P. Dawnay, Brig.-General J. E. Edmonds, and Colonels W. H. Bartholomew and T. E. Lawrence for the valuable information which they put at my disposal.

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AN OUTLINE OF THE EGYPTIAN AND PALESTINE CAMPAIGNS, 1914—1918.

CHAPTER I.

THE SITUATION BEFORE TURKEY JOINED IN THE WAR.

German Influence.—Turkey declared war on Great Britain on 30th October, 1914. Her neutrality before that date was distinctly benevolent towards Germany. It is known now that, on 4th August, the Kaiser had informed the Greek Minister in Berlin that an alliance existed between Germany and Turkey. However, at the outset Turkey advertised her neutrality; but, even in August, it was evident that she was preparing for an invasion of Egypt.

For many years back, Germany had been working for influence in Constantinople. The Kaiser had visited Abdul Hamid; and in 1898 had toured in Palestine, conducted by Mr. Cook. Krupp's had large contracts for the Turkish Army; and von der Goltz, and the German Military Mission under Liman von Sanders, were engaged in reorganizing the Turkish forces. The Bagdad Railway Concession had been secured; and work on that line was in full swing. German colonies in Palestine were thriving. German trade in Egypt was booming. The peaceful penetration of Turkey had been accomplished before 1914.

In 1914, German influence was paramount in Constantinople, and that Turkey did not enter the war at once was merely because it did not appear convenient to the Central Powers to bring her in. It may be surmised that, if Germany had brought off her coup in 1914 successfully, the Turkish Army—intact—would have been a very valuable weapon in Germany's hands to use against either Russia or Great Britain to back up German demands and peace terms.

Many factors combined to influence the operations in Egypt. Egypt occupies a unique position; it is a connecting link between Europe, Asia and Africa; it is the meeting-ground of East and West; and so it was peculiarly sensitive to events in both distant and adjacent theatres.

The war in Europe, to begin with, did not go as smoothly as Germany had forecasted. Great Britain came in. Russia's expedited mobilization, and prompt invasion of East Prussia, was another upset; Germany's reverse on the Marne in September, a third; and she had made no effective progress during October.

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It was disappointing that reinforcements for Britain were pouring in from overseas Dominions and India. The Austrians had been hammered at Lemberg, and were finding the Russians too much for them. Germany felt that the attention of Great Britain, and of Russia, must be diverted from Europe, and so brought Turkey into the war at the end of October, 1914. (See *Plate* I.)

Turkey had mobilized in August. The arrival of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* at Constantinople had greatly strengthened her in the Black Sea. Turkish opinion was indignant with Great Britain for commandeering the battleships approaching completion for Turkey in her shipyards. Public subscriptions had been raised for these vessels, and the Turks had been conscious of their naval weakness as regards both Russia and Greece. An excuse for hostilities with Russia was easily found by interfering with Russian vessels in the Black Sea. The moment was not altogether advantageous to Turkey, as Rumania, Bulgaria and Greece were still neutral, and the supply of war material across these countries was hampered as soon as Turkey became an open belligerent.

The Turkish Empire.—Turkey to-day is but the remnant of a great empire, but one with a brilliant history of conquest. Her sway once had extended to Vienna and Odessa, the Caucasus, Persia, and into Central Africa. The Turks of Europe and Asia Minor are proud of their fighting powers, and are willing to be led to repeat their exploits. Their empire is built up of many races, but there is one predominant creed. Turk and Arab and Kurd in the main are sincere Moslems.

The Turks recognized Russia as their traditional enemy. She stood as the liberator of non-Moslem territories from their rule. She aimed at supplanting them in Constantinople. Great Britain was conniving in Russia's aims. Although the Turk is naturally apathetic, he will respond when Russia is the immediate enemy, and his religion can be worked upon.

In Turkey itself, the political situation was that she possessed liberal institutions only in name. Power was centred in a small military group, of whom Enver and Talaat were the moving spirits. This group was tied to Germany, and in her control. The moderate parties were powerless to interfere.

Turkey did not enter the War for nothing: the incentives put before her were:—The recovery of her lost provinces from Russia and from Great Britain; and territorial gains from Persia—always under the tutelage of Germany.

The immediate effects of Turkey joining into the War were:—To close the Black Sea trade of the *Entente* with Russia and Rumania; to oblige Russia to retain more troops in the Caucasus; and to compel Great Britain to take more active steps to safeguard the Suez Canal, Egypt, and her great oil interests in Southern

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Persia. Also there seemed a fair prospect that Moslem sympathies might be raised in Egypt, and in India, and revolts ensue.

The Turkish Empire geographically is very extended, and it contains remarkable physical features—mountain ranges, great rivers, lakes and vast deserts—which separate its fertile and populated spaces. In time of peace, Turkey was largely dependent upon transport by sea. Constantinople itself is at an extreme end of the Empire, and owes its strategical importance to the control it can exercise upon sea communication.

Turkey's artificial means of communication are poorly developed, and incomplete. Her great highways are those of Alexander, and have not been altered much, apparently. River transport is still in a medieval condition. Railways were very inadequate. A glance at the map will show how her main routes are hindered. Towards Armenia and the Caucasus, the railway stops 400 miles short of Erzerum, and troops must be maintained either by sea through Trebizond, or by poor roads over 5,000 ft. passes.

The Bagdad railway through Cilicia was a patchwork in 1914. It barely entered Mesopotamia. It was continuous only to Bozanti. (See *Plate* I.) The tunnels through the 11,000 ft. Taurus and 6,000 ft. Amanus ranges had not been pierced, nor was the formation drained. Traffic over these great mountain obstacles went by road: and, in the winter, was liable to prolonged interruption. Through trains were only able to run three weeks before the armistice. The railway stopped at Nisibin, 100 miles west of Mosul on the Tigris. Road and river transport had to be used to Tekrit, whence another railway extended to Bagdad. Coal was almost unobtainable, and the wood fuel was very inefficient. There were no proper workshops east of the Taurus, and the line was cumbered with locomotives and wagons awaiting repair. South of Aleppo, the broad gauge extended only to Rayak. There it met the Beirut-Damascus line, also French-owned, which is of 3 ft. 6 in. gauge with much trackwork over the Lebanon. From Damascus to Palestine and Arabia, the Hedjaz railway and its branches furnished fairly good transportation: on 3 ft. 6 in. gauge. But these lines suffered also from fuel and water difficulties. The Hedjaz railway stopped at Medina, 250 miles from Mecca, the desired terminus. In Palestine, there was one branch line from Deraa down the Yarmuk valley to Haifa, also a French-owned line from Jaffa to Jerusalem. Observe how all the railways avoided the coast; the Turk had a wholesome respect for our disembarking propensities.

The Turkish Army was organized to form 15 divisions; and 15 more were rapidly raised when war broke out. This gave nearly 300,000 men to start with. Ultimately, Turkey had nearly 50 divisions—never complete—approximately 800,000 men. But many of the best fighting troops, the peasants of Anatolia, had been ex-

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pended in the last Balkan wars. The equipment of the army, too, had been dissipated, and had not been made up. Besides, there were the hindrances due to having to cross neutral territory, which impeded the completion of the army in war material, when hostilities commenced.

The army was not homogeneous in race, religion, or language. It comprised, besides Turks:—Arabs, Armenians, Circassians, Kurds, Syrians and Levantines of mixed European breed. Generally, the impression was that the troops were illiterate, and the officers scarcely educated, and taken from the cities, chiefly because they could read, write and add. Officer desertions were frequent.

The outstanding features of the Turkish soldier are his patience, hardiness and stubbornness in defence. But he seldom succeeded in the offensive; partly because he was poorly led and cared for. He did not like the German element in the army.

The fighting equipment of the troops was intended to be good, but their transport and supply system was poor; and the prevalence of corruption resulted in the field armies often being miserably deficient in clothing, food, and medical and technical stores. As the war progressed, the control of these services was taken over more and more by Germans and Austrians. They supplied the Flying Corps, Telegraphs, Mechanical Transport and Railways. The Austrians specialized in the Artillery and Medical Branches.

In 1916, special reinforcement troops were organized in Germany —the "Pasha" formations—and, during 1917 and 1918, three of these were sent to Palestine or Mesopotamia, and also an Asia Corps.

A Pasha Group consisted of:—

1 Battery.
1 Battalion.
1 Squadron.
Technical Detachments.

About 1,700 men in all.

The Turkish troops which were already mobilized were in two main groups at the end of October, 1914. In Armenia, about Erzerum, Isset Pasha had four army corps, about 180,000 men, destined to invade the Caucasus. In Syria and Cilicia, Jemal Pasha had about 140,000 men. These were grouped about Aleppo and Damascus to protect the coast, or to operate in Mesopotamia, Arabia, or towards Egypt, as required.

Egypt.—Lord Milner summed up Egypt truly as "the land of paradox." Many things there are peculiar: our position in the country was certainly anomalous. Egypt was a recognized dependency of Turkey, to whom she was paying an annual tribute; and yet Great Britain had been occupying, and, in fact, controlling this nominal Turkish dominion for 32 years.

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The Khedive, Abbas II., was obviously inimical to Great Britain, as he supported the Nationalist party in Egypt, and was intriguing with the Germans. When war broke out he was in Constantinople. His uncle, Hussein, was proclaimed Sultan, the suzerainty of Turkey was repudiated, and in mid-December, 1914, Great Britain announced a protectorate over Egypt. Martial law had been declared previously, and the Egyptians were informed that the British would defend their country.

The Egyptians, having been governed by the Turk, regarded him with mixed feelings. They stood in awe of Pashas, and yet had admiration for their Oriental methods of government. As good Moslems, they reverence the Sultan as the temporal head of the Mohammedan world, and as keeper of the Holy Places. But they do not want the Turk back as ruler in the land.

Towards the British, the mass of the people were apathetic. Our control was tolerated, not appreciated, and certainly not popular. Their interests were agricultural—not fleets, armies, or European squabbles. The political cry of "Egypt for the Egyptians" (before the war) met with little response from the masses—Fellahin or Bedouin.

The articulate and urban population of Egypt contains a large proportion of Europeans; it is very cosmopolitan—French, Italian, Greek, German, and the indefinite Levantine. The sympathies of this European element were not always pro-British, and it provided fine soil for espionage and propaganda.

Fertile and habitable Egypt is merely the Nile Delta and its river banks, cultivated by the Fellahin. The rest is desert, some of which is occupied—sparsely—by nomad Arab tribes. The deserts on the east and south-east (Sinai and Red Sea Littoral) are mountainous. Except near the coast, water is scarce. To the west and south-west the barrier is illimitable sand, but it is remarkable for a belt of oases about 100 miles west of the Nile.

Egypt is peculiar in its communications. It possessed no metalled roads, except in the chief cities. Its chief means of transport were its railways (of many gauges), the Nile and its canals, the camel and the donkey.

Egypt is often called "rainless," but the northern coast gets a regular rainfall in January and February; and in both east and west the hills hold the rain for several weeks. There are many rock cisterns of very ancient origin, formerly known only to the Arabs. The movement of troops in these northern deserts is quite practicable for those who know their resources and limitations.

It is a popular fallacy that the Suez Canal is in Egypt itself. Actually, the Canal is some 30 miles from the habitable Delta, and it traverses the wilderness. The military aspects of the Suez Canal will be dealt with later on, but, in connection with Egypt, two features of it may be mentioned now.

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The towns along the Canal—Suez, Ismailia and Port Said—are entirely dependent on Nile water brought from Cairo, 100 miles, by the "Sweet-Water Canal," which is also navigable for Nile boats as far as Ismailia. At Ismailia this canal branches north and south to serve Suez and Port Said.

The Canal ports were connected to Egypt proper by a single line of railway from Zagazig (doubled from Zagazig to Ismailia only in December, 1915). No roads for vehicles existed either from the Delta to the Suez Canal, or along its banks.

When war ensued, Egypt became of immense importance to the Allies. Troops and supplies from India and the Commonwealth were streaming through the Suez Canal. The cable communications to the East passed through her territory. Egypt herself furnished many necessaries—cotton, grain, sugar and oil fuel. She was to serve as a rest camp and training ground; for the country had natural advantages, it was central, and it seemed difficult to assail.

The pre-war British garrison in Egypt was about 5,000 men, but the regular units comprised in it were soon required elsewhere. To replace them, the 42nd (East Lancs) Division (T.F.) was sent out from home by the end of September. India, too, was requested to furnish troops and, besides, the overseas troops from Australia and New Zealand were dispatched to Egypt to complete their equipment and training.

India sent off the Indian Expeditionary Forces—known officially as I.E.F. (E) and (F)—which later were formed into the 10th and 11th Indian Divisions. These began to arrive in the middle of November. The first Australian and New Zealand troops disembarked at Suez early in December. At the end of 1914, Egypt contained about 70,000 British, Dominion, and Indian troops, of whom only the Indian had completed their training.

The Egyptian Army, of Egyptians and Sudanese, about 22,000 in all, was necessarily employed almost entirely in the Sudan. Only its training depôts, and a few troops for guards, are normally stationed in the Delta. Still, the Egyptian Army was able to provide some artillery, and later several battalions for service in Egypt and Sinai.

The Egyptian coastguard was a body on a military basis, but not under the Army. It was used to check smuggling over the desert, and was well equipped with camels. It contained a certain foreign element, and proved unreliable when tried in service. The camels, however, were kept on with the Army.

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CHAPTER II.

The Turkish Attack on the Suez Canal in 1915.

The Germans had early appreciated the importance to the *Entente* of the Suez Canal and Egypt. They realized how sensitive Great Britain would be even to a threat to hinder the free passage of her ships. They had called the Canal "the throat of England," and soon began to try and throttle her there. Ineffectual attempts were made to scuttle neutral vessels passing through the Canal. As a result an officers' guard was placed on every vessel and attempts to drop mines astern were specially watched for.

When Turkey was brought into the war, immediately she was set the task of raiding the Canal, with the further possibility of raising revolt in Egypt. She was also directed to engage Russia in the Caucasus; and there was to be her own little enterprise into Persia. All three undertakings were soon under way; and Germany provided substantial aid for the first two in material and staff.

The move on Southern Persia was forestalled by India. The 6th Indian Division disembarked in the Persian Gulf on 6th November—a quick piece of work—and on 15th November Sir A. Barrett's troops defeated the Turks at Sahil, and opened the way to Busra. On 9th December the Turkish garrison of Kurna on the Tigris surrendered.

On the Caucasus border, the four army corps of Isset Pasha set out in November from Erzerum. A surprise march on Kars was planned. The Turkish lines of advance were very difficult; the snow was against them. The Russians had the advantage of railways and fair roads. General Vozonov fell on three corps in turn, and this group of the Turkish forces was almost destroyed.

The First Move.—The raid on Egypt was well organized and carried through with rapidity and determination. The Turkish troops for this enterprise began to move early in November. Jemal Pasha had the 8th and 12th Corps, about six divisions, in south and central Syria. Of these, the force destined for Egypt comprised:—

10th Division 23rd Division 25th Division	3 Divisions, or 21 Battalions, and a large number of Arab auxiliaries.

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29th Cavalry Regiment.
2 6-in. howitzers.
2 Machine-gun Companies.
2 Engineer and Pontoon Companies.

In all, about 30,000 men, of whom 15,000 were to cross the Sinai Desert first. Jemal's Chief-of-Staff was a Bavarian, Colonel Kress von Kressenstein, a capable and energetic officer.

From their group position about Damascus to the Sinai frontier, the Turks had the 3 ft. 6 in. gauge railway, Deraa-Afule-Haifa; also they had the Palestine backbone road, Afule-Nablus-Jerusalem-Hebron-Beersheba; and the Coast road, Jaffa-Gaza-El Arish.

Beersheba was selected as the advanced base. The Hedjaz railway could be of no assistance beyond Deraa; the transport difficulties overland from Maan through Akaba were too great to render an advance from that direction possible.

The Sinai Desert consists, on the north, of a narrow coastal plain with sand dunes; and is from 5 to 15 miles wide. The sand carries a scrub suitable for camel grazing, but the going is very heavy for infantry or vehicles. The dune country merges into barren stony hills rising to 3,000 feet in the centre; while the southern mass of the Peninsula is still more rough and precipitous. There are no roads for wheels anywhere. Water is scanty, except in the winter. Nomad Arabs occupy Sinai with their camel herds.

The Wadi el Arish—the Biblical "River of Egypt"—is a very extensive water channel. It is dry for nearly all the year; but usually has three or four spates, between December and February, when it comes down in a broad torrent for two or three days at a time. The town of El Arish is near its outlet, about two miles inland. It is the trade centre of Sinai, and is just 100 miles from the Suez Canal. The only other town in Sinai is Nekl, 60 miles east of Suez on the Akaba pilgrim track. Nekl also is on the Wadi el Arish, and gets its water from rock wells.

Three lines of advance were at the choice of the Turks:—

(*i*) Along the coast from El Arish through El Abd and Katia;
(*ii*) Over the Sinai hills, from Beersheba or El Arish, by various tracks through El Hassana and Jifjaffa and Bir Hamme;
(*iii*) Part of the Pilgrim's Road from Nekl to Suez.

The coastal route has been used by armies from time immemorial. There are many wells, water is obtainable by digging on the beach. The inner tracks were more difficult, and normally the water is less assured.

But the Turkish Expedition was setting out just as the winter

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rains were due; and, until March, there would be pools on the *wadis*, and the wells and rock cisterns would be full. (One such pool and large rock cisterns were found in the Wadi Mushkeib.) This central route was not liable to interference from the sea, and it was the one the British would least expect a large force to use.

Jemal Pasha elected to use all three routes, but to send the principal part of his force across the centre of the Sinai Hills. The selection of the centre of the Suez Canal as his intended point of crossing also, doubtless, influenced the use of the hill routes for the main body.

The initial distribution of the Turkish column was approximately:—

Nekl Road.—Three battalions infantry; mountain battery: 3,000.

Centre Road.—Six battalions infantry; heavy artillery; pontoon train: 6,000 or 7,000.

Coast Road.—Two battalions infantry; mounted troops and artillery: 3,000.

Military Aspects of the Suez Canal.—The Suez Canal is a formidable obstacle. The banks generally are raised from 5 to 25 feet above the desert level. The ship canal flows with a strong stream, whose direction varies with the wind, at a rate of about five miles per hour. The sweet-water canal is only about 30 ft. across, and from 4 ft. to 6 ft. deep.

The Suez Canal may be regarded in four subdivisions.

First, from Suez to the north end of the Great Bitter Lake: for some 40 miles the Canal traverses bare desert, and the two Bitter Lakes. The sweet-water canal does not run close to the ship canal; and on the west side, except at Suez, there is no cultivated or habitable territory until the Nile is reached 80 miles away.

Next, between the north end of the Great Bitter Lake and the north end of Timsah, at Ferry Post, for about 15 miles, the ship canal and the sweet-water canal run close together; and there is a belt of irrigated land about half a mile wide along the latter; and this belt extends to Ismailia and Tel-el-Kebir, widening to over a mile about Ismailia.

Ismailia is an important town, the administrative centre of the canal. The Company's head offices and dockyards are there: besides, it is a railway junction, and has the lock gates and sluices for controlling the fresh water to Suez and Port Said. The Eastern Telegraph Company's land lines, from Alexandria and Cairo, pass through Ismailia to Suez.

The *Third* subdivision extends from Ferry Post (Ismailia) to

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Kantara. At first the canal enters a deep cutting for two miles; then it runs through a very sandy stretch of desert for 18 miles. The sweet-water canal is five miles away, until it rejoins the ship canal at Kantara. Beyond the sweet-water canal is the bare desert—soft sand for 20 miles to the Delta.

The *Fourth* subdivision is the 25 miles from Kantara to Port Said. The two canals run close alongside each other, separated from Lake Menzala on the west by a narrow embankment. On the east lies the Plain of Tineh (mud !); much of it is below the sea-level, and able to be inundated.

Considered from the enemy point of view, the choice of objectives on the canal reduces to a very few points.

(1) Suez to north of Bitter Lake—no good. A force which seized Suez would be in the air, 80 waterless miles from the Nile, and with its water cut off at Ismailia.

(2) Port Said to Kantara, similarly, the Lake Menzala is as bad an obstacle as the Suez-Mokattam desert.

(3) North-east of the Great Bitter Lake to Serapeum, and at Ferry Post, fresh water is available immediately the ship canal has been crossed. Ismailia railway junction and other resources are at hand; fresh water exists all the way to the Delta, and the sweet-water canal is navigable by Nile boats and launches. This section is specially attractive at Serapeum and Tussum, where the eastern canal bank is not in full view from the west bank.

(4) Between Ferry Post and Kantara the latter place offers the only attraction; elsewhere the fresh water is too far away. But the stretch of desert beyond rather rules out this section as a crossing-place.

The conclusion is that the portion of the canal between the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah offers the best sites for crossing. Ferry Post is a second choice, Kantara a poor third.

Broadly, the British intention was to let the Turks first overcome the desert obstacle and to use the Suez Canal itself as a second obstacle. The plan was to strike at the enemy only when he arrived at the Suez Canal, where the defenders would have the benefit of ship's guns and armed launches—a purely passive defence.

At first, rather wild figures appeared as to the enemy's numbers. When Turkey declared war, Cairo noted that about four corps were on the Hedjaz railway, and the Turks had 40,000 armed Bedouin auxiliaries. But ten days later a former military attaché in Constantinople had estimated that not more than 70,000 Turks could be brought against Sinai.

General Sir John Maxwell, commanding the force in Egypt, formed the Suez Canal defences into a separate command under Major-General A. Wilson. The latter had the 10th and 11th Indian Divisions (six infantry brigades), Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade,

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and Bikaneer Camel Corps; in all, about 30,000 men. Besides, as previously mentioned, in Egypt, about Cairo, were the 42nd Division, some Yeomanry and the Australian and New Zealand formations, training and equipping. Altogether, the troops in Egypt amounted to about 70,000 men. The force was short in artillery, and so relied on the Royal Navy and French war vessels to supplement its gun-fire from the Canal. Major-General A. Wilson put his headquarters at Ismailia and had an advanced base at Zagazig, whence the single-line railway served the Suez Canal.

The Suez Canal Defences were organized into four sections. The principal defended posts on the east bank were :—

1st Section: El Shatt, Kubri, Geneffe;
2nd Section: Deversoir, Serapeum;
3rd Section: Ferry Post, Ferdan, Ballah;
4th Section: Kantara, Port Said Salt Works.

The 10th Indian Division, and part of the 11th, furnished troops for these posts. The remainder of the 11th Division, and the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade, were retained in reserve at Moascar, near Ismailia. Heavy bridges were provided at Kubri and Kantara. Light foot-bridges and ferries were prepared for most of the other posts. Water transport was in great demand, and steam and motor boats were only too scarce at first. The lack of a road along the Suez Canal was much felt; and this was not provided until nearly two years later.

Three days after the Turks had declared war, 14 transports left India for Suez with the first instalment of the 12 battalions, three cavalry regiments, and Bikaneer Camel Corps, which had been put under orders for Egypt a fortnight earlier.

Egypt immediately evacuated El Arish and Nekl according to plan. The Turks crossed the frontier, and by 15th November they were considered to have 5,000 infantry and 3,000 Arab auxiliaries in El Arish. Four days later they reconnoitred El Abd, and on 20th November attacked and drove back a strong patrol of Egyptian Coastguards at Bir-el-Nus (half-way between Abd and Kantara). Constantinople announced this skirmish as the occupation of the Suez Canal. Early in December the inundation ordered by General Sir John Maxwell—between Port Said and Kantara—had taken effect and greatly reduced the front to be patrolled.

The Turkish Advance.—Troops of the Turkish Expedition had entrained at Damascus on 23rd December. They proceeded *via* Afule, whence they marched to Jerusalem, and on through Beersheba, Auja, and El Arish. The British were getting fairly good information of their progress. On 13th January, the Turks

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were reported at Auja and Kossaima, and said to be increasing at El Arish. (See *Plate* II.)

On the 15th January, the R.F.C. located 700 troops at El Abd, and parties on the Bir Murr and Moiya Harab roads.

On 24th January, 200 Turks appeared at Dueidar. Next day the post at Hill 70, eight miles out from Kantara, was attacked.

Jemal Pasha now issued his hortative to his troops :—

> " Warriors ! Behind you lie the vast deserts ; before you is the craven enemy ; behind him the rich land of Egypt, which is waiting impatiently for you. If you falter, death will overtake you. Before you Paradise lies."

The Turkish advance was now in full swing. Warships took post on 26th January, and Cairo was asked for an Australian Brigade. The Intelligence reports of 26th January showed 5,400 Turks at various wells some 25 miles from the Canal. Next day, these numbers had swelled to 9,400 men, and some had come on closer. On 27th January, Kubri, seven miles north of Suez, was raided.

It will be observed, that the raid attacks were made on the left and right, while, actually, the main attacking force was assembling against the centre.

On 28th January, Kantara again was attacked; and a new camp appeared at Bir Habeita, eight miles east of Deversoir.

The camps continued to grow ; but shipping went on through the Canal by daylight undisturbed.

On 1st February, the British patrols were in touch with the enemy all day from Serapeum to Ferdan, about 20 miles of front.

The situation on 2nd February was :—

> 5,000 Turkish infantry and guns east of Serapeum ;
> 5,000 Turkish infantry and guns outside Ferry Post ;
> 2,000 Turkish infantry and guns close to Kantara.

General Wilson reinforced behind Ferry Post with a battalion, and Cairo was asked for two more battalions and some Yeomanry, and also sent up a mountain battery from the Egyptian Army.

The Turks moved to the attack on the night of 2nd-3rd February. They sniped at Kubri and Ferdan, and made a feeble attack on Kantara defences. But, under cover of artillery and infantry fire, they brought their pontoons to the Suez Canal between Serapeum and Tussum. (See *Plate* III.)

Their attempt to cross was broken up by fire action, and by the armed launches on the canal. Actually, three pontoons got across, but all the Turks in them were killed or captured. At 0930 hours on 3rd February, the Turks brought up fresh troops

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against Serapeum, and again tried to force a crossing. Traffic in the canal was suspended. The shipping anchored in Lake Timsah came under artillery fire. The battleships *Ocean* and *Swiftsure* were moved to Deversoir and Tussum respectively.

At 1330 hours, the Turks drew off, leaving about 60 dead and 300 prisoners with the defenders. Covered by weak rearguards, the enemy began to retreat by the routes over which he had come.

On 4th February, the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade were crossed over at Ferry Post, and reconnoitred the enemy; they captured a small convoy, but did not engage the enemy closely. The night 4th-5th February was quiet: the whole canal was clear of Turks. On 5th February, the R.F.C. reported enemy columns retiring along all roads. The Suez Canal was reopened by day for ship traffic; and night traffic was resumed a week later.

Observations.—The Turkish advance was boldly conceived and well executed. Although it did not achieve its prime object of raising revolt in Egypt and blocking the Canal, it had a great effect. The demonstration of the possibility of bringing so large a force as 12,000 men of all arms across the Sinai Desert so impressed the authorities that the next time the canal was threatened nearly 400,000 troops were massed in Egypt. Moreover, the event showed that defending Egypt, and defending the Suez Canal, are not synonymous. The passage of shipping in the canal is obstructed unless the canal is defended from further east than its own banks.

The Turkish effort deserves admiration. To bring 12,000 or 16,000 men, artillery and pontoon train across 140 miles of desert was creditable; to assault a front defended potentially by 70,000 men, and the heavy metal of ships' armament, was audacious: to depart again with artillery and baggage intact, and a loss of not 10 per cent. of infantry was clear gain and left the defenders little to boast of. The Turks gave out that the attack was merely a reconnaissance raid, the precursor of a real descent in force. A German account published later declared that the Suez Canal was bridged, five battalions got across, and, but for the bulk of the attackers missing their way in a sand storm which enabled a cruiser to come up and sink the bridge, the invasion of Egypt would have been accomplished!

Among the features of these 1st four months of war in Egypt and Sinai the most prominent were:—

(*a*) The general unpreparedness for war;
(*b*) Scanty knowledge of the water resources and routes of the Northern and Sinai Deserts;
(*c*) Lack of appreciation of the extent to which a descent on Egypt from east or west was practicable.

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The attack on the Suez Canal was met by purely passive defence. There was no intention of, or preparation for, either counter-attack or pursuit. Although the Imperial Cavalry Brigade crossed the Suez Canal after the Turkish attack had failed, it merely watched the retreating enemy and returned to its camps. The moral effect of this inaction was that the Turk, although he failed, felt unbeaten, and he returned to attack again with greater forces 18 months later. Lack of transport has been urged in excuse for this. But Egypt and the Sudan employed normally—and ultimately furnished the army with—thousands of camels and donkeys. And the Yeomanry and the Overseas troops in Cairo were admirable material at hand for extemporizing Camelry.

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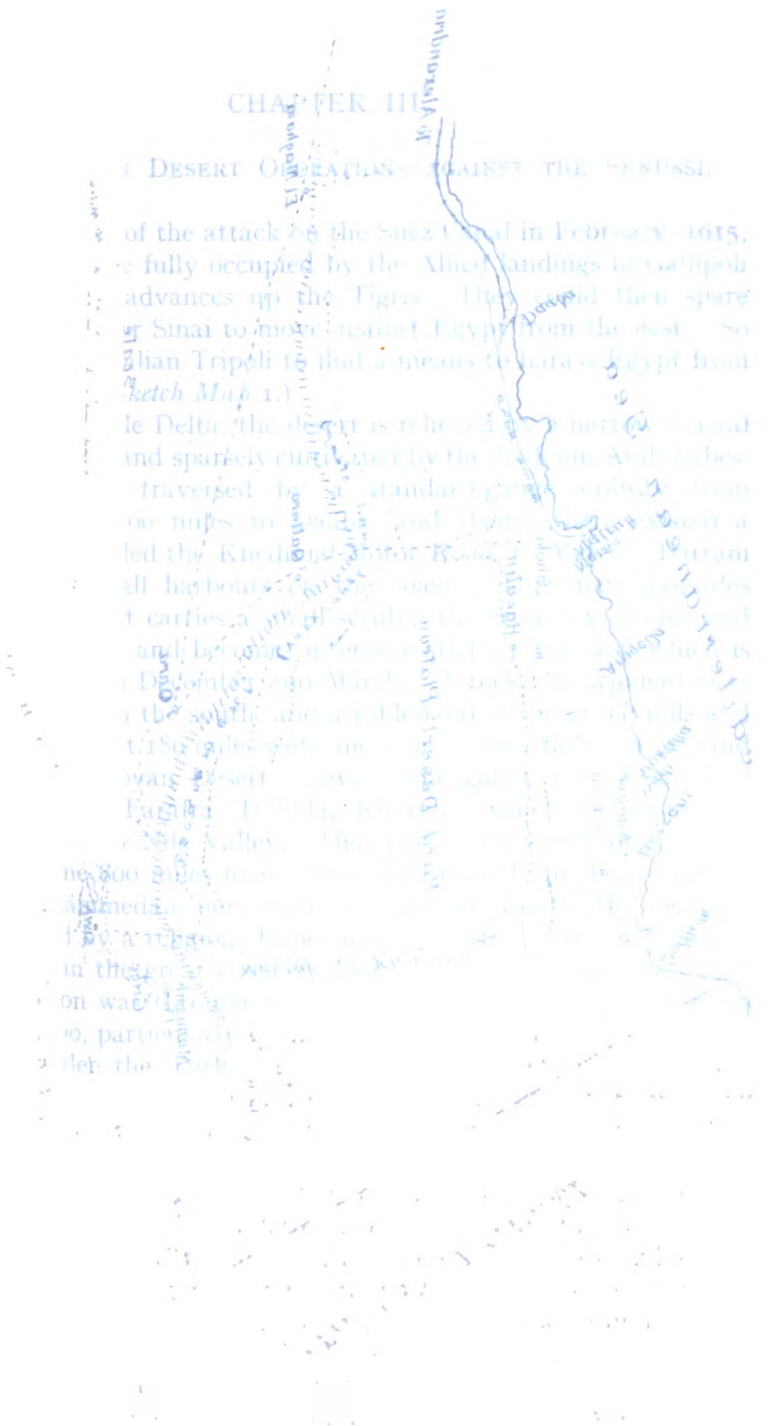

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OPERATIONS AGAINST SENUSSI, 1915–1917.

SKETCH I.

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CHAPTER III.

The Western Desert Operations against the Senussi.

After the fiasco of the attack on the Suez Canal in February, 1915, the Turks became fully occupied by the Allied landings in Gallipoli and the British advances up the Tigris. They could then spare no more troops for Sinai to move against Egypt from the east. So they looked to Italian Tripoli to find a means to harass Egypt from the west. (See *Sketch Map* 1.)

West of the Nile Delta, the desert is relieved by a narrow coastal plain, inhabited and sparsely cultivated by the Bedouin Arab tribes. This plain was traversed by a standard-gauge railway from Alexandria for 100 miles to Daaba, and thence there existed a cleared track, called the Khedivial Motor Road, to Matruh, Barrani and Sollum (small harbours on the coast). This plain provides camel grazing; it carries a small scrub; the ground is friable and dusty in summer and becomes intensely sticky after rain, which is frequent between December and March. A rocky escarpment rises from the plain on the south, and a table-land of limestone hills and hard desert, about 180 miles wide, meets near Siwa the limitless sand dunes of the Libyan Desert. Siwa is the gateway to a series of oases (Baharia, Farafra, Dakhla, Khargha) which lie about 100 miles west of the Nile Valley. That cultivated valley presented a frontier, some 800 miles long, exposed to raids from these oases.

The Mohammedan nonconformist-sect, known as the Senussi, was founded by a religious leader in 1835. Its centres of influence lay mostly in the great oasis of Kufra and at Siwa, and its outlet to civilization was through Tripoli. The sect had many adherents in Egypt, too, particularly in the Fayum, Behera, and in the coastal plain. Under the Turks, the Senussi were quiet, but when the Italians took over Tripoli and restricted their caravan trade, they became hostile and supported the Turkish cause. They therefore were susceptible to fresh Turkish propaganda.

In the spring of 1915, Jafar Bey, or Pasha, was sent to the Senussi with arms, and bearing a letter from the Kaiser to their leader, Sayed Ahmed. The Tripoli coast had convenient coves for landing, and further consignments of munitions and money were conveyed by submarine from Greece. The movement took form in May; the Senussi tribesmen were drilled, and furnished a tolerably regular force, which by the autumn of 1915 numbered about 5,000 riflemen, with a few machine-guns and 10-pdr. mountain artillery with camel

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transport. In November, the Senussi displayed open hostility. They carried off captive the shipwrecked crew of H.M.S. *Tara*, which had been torpedoed near Sollum; and, on 6th November, they shelled Sollum itself, and raided in the coastal plain.

This movement of the Senussi alarmed the authorities in Egypt. Our deadlock in the Dardanelles had reacted unfavourably there. Egypt had been drawn on for troops, for stores, and for native labour, and she was encumbered with the wounded. The Egyptian began to give ear to the Senussi agitation, supported as it was easily from within by strong Turco-German propaganda. A rising in Egypt was feared.

Action at Hazalin.—General Sir John Maxwell withdrew the Egyptian garrisons from Sollum and Barrani, but held on to Mersa Matruh and Daaba. A composite force of British, South African, New Zealand and Indian troops, under Major-General Wallace, was assembled at Matruh to cover the western flank of the Nile Delta. The Senussi occupied Sollum, moved on to wells near Matruh, and raided the Daaba-Alexandria railway. General Wallace drove them off on 13th December, and again on 25th, but was not able to follow up. The Senussi forces withdrew to Hazalin, about 25 miles south-west of Matruh. More troops were concentrated, and on 23rd of January, 1916, General Wallace set out from Shola (16 miles west of Matruh) to engage the enemy. The night had been wet. Our force marched at 0600 hours in two columns :—

Right Column.—One squadron, Notts Battery, R.H.A.
Three battalions (15th Sikhs, 2nd S. A. Regt., 1st Batt. N.Z.M. Brigade). These moved by compass-bearing, direct on Hazalin.

Left Column.—Six squadrons, M.G. Section, Battery, H.A.C.
On the left front of the infantry.

Reserve.—Two troops Yeomanry, half battalion, Royal Scots.

The enemy were encountered about nine miles out. They held a front of some 1½ miles, approached by quite open ground; and a heavy mirage rendered observation difficult. At 1000 hours the 15th Sikhs advanced to attack, supported by the other two battalions. The enemy steadily fell back for three miles, and about noon began seriously to threaten our right flank. About 1330 hours, the mounted troops also were being pressed until infantry got up to support them. But, by 1500 hours, the infantry had overrun and burnt the hostile camp, the tribesmen drew off, and the action terminated indecisively. The weather was miserably wet and cold. The train was stuck in the mud nine miles away, and the troops spent the night in the rain, devoid of supplies, shelter, or blankets.

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Next morning, the column marched back to Shola, most of the wounded carried by hand, and the troops dragging their first-line transport, until they came up with the supply train about midday. Our casualties were 12 killed, 291 wounded; the enemy casualties were estimated at 200 killed, 500 wounded.

After this affair the Senussi became active in the oases bordering the Nile; and, lest they should invade the Nile valley, the 53rd Division and five brigades of Yeomanry (dismounted) were tied up in garrisons between the Fayum and Assuan. All the Senussi in these oases would have been cut off if we could have occupied Siwa; but, at this time, this was not considered possible.

Action at Agagir.—After the action at Hazalin, Major-General Peyton relieved General Wallace, and further steps were taken to oust the Senussi from the coastal plain in order to reoccupy Barrani and Sollum.

A depot of supply was formed at Amgeila, about 50 miles west of Matruh; and, on 20th February, a column under Brig.-General Lukin was sent out from Matruh to attack the Senussi assembled near Barrani.

General Lukin's column consisted of:—

3 squadrons Dorset Yeomanry,
1 squadron Bucks Yeomanry,
1 battalion Royal Scots,
2 battalions South African Brigade,
1 battery Notts R.H.A.

After three days' marching, the column halted on 25th February in the Wadi Maktilla, and the enemy were located nine miles off, at Agagir, 14 miles south-east of Barrani.

They were about 1,500 strong, with three guns and five machine-guns. At 0600 hours on 26th February, General Lukin moved on; the Senussi stood until the infantry attack came on—when they broke, and their position was captured by 1400 hours. The pursuit was taken up by the Dorset Yeomanry, who charged the retreating column, with the result that the enemy lost heavily, were completely scattered, and Jafar Pasha was captured. Barrani was reoccupied next day. After replenishing, the column moved on, and retook Sollum on 14th March. Here, the armoured cars cut off all the enemy's artillery and transport. On 17th March an armoured car detachment, under the Duke of Westminster, set out to try and find the camp in which the crew of H.M.S. *Tara* had been imprisoned. After travelling over 116 miles of unknown wastes, they hit on the camp and brought back some 40 survivors of the crew. The cars covered 240 miles of desert in 24 hours.

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NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY.

CHAPTER IV.

The Second Turkish Attack on Egypt—The Battle of Romani. The British Advance to El Arish.

In the latter half of 1915, things had not gone well for the *Entente* Powers. Germany had broken into Russia. The Austrians had overrun Serbia. Bulgaria had declared against us. Greece was looking askance at us. The Salonika expedition was having a very anxious time. Mesopotamia was our bright spot. At the end of October, General Nixon was authorized to move on Bagdad, and General Townshend, with the remains of the 6th Division and a cavalry brigade, pushed up the Tigris to Ctesiphon, 11 miles from Bagdad. But the Turks, no longer so pressed in the Dardanelles, had sent down 30,000 men, and, on 22nd November, General Townshend was checked, obliged to retreat, and hemmed in at Kut.

Lord Kitchener had visited Egypt early in November, and after this the scheme of defence on the Suez Canal was entirely recast. Instead of allowing the enemy to approach the canal itself, he was in the future to be engaged in the desert. The canal was to be immune from long-range artillery fire. A line of strong posts and almost continuous entrenchments was laid out eight to ten miles east, parallel to the canal. To execute this work, metalled roads, railways, and pipe-lines had to be built out into the desert from eight to nine points on the canal; and an immense amount of material and labour was expended.

In December, 1915, at Gallipoli, Suvla and Anzac were evacuated. Just then, an intended Turkish attack in force on Egypt was widely reported; in fact, so aggressively was it advertised that it seemed to be overdone, and the information spread to mislead us. However, the troops from Gallipoli were brought to Alexandria to re-equip, and, to cope with the Turks, fresh divisions streamed out to Egypt from home. In February, 1916, we had some 13 infantry and mounted divisions there, nearly 400,000 men. Egypt, in fact, had become a rendezvous, and contained the general strategical reserve for the whole Empire.

Formation of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.—The command and administration in Egypt at the end of 1915 was in a complex state. General Sir John Maxwell was in command of the "Force in Egypt." But the War Office had a branch organization,

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mainly of Q.M.G. directorates, called the " Levant Base." This dealt with Salonika, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, and India, independently of Sir J. Maxwell, and was controlled by General Altham. On the top of these two, there arrived the " Mediterranean Expeditionary Force " from Gallipoli, and the reinforcing divisions from the United Kingdom, with Sir Archibald Murray as Commander-in-Chief, and also independent of Sir John Maxwell. Thus, an extraordinary triangular situation existed. A dividing line about Zagazig separated the command of Sir Archibald Murray from that of the " Force in Egypt." G.H.Q., Mediterranean Expeditionary Force was at Ismailia ; G.H.Q., Force in Egypt, at Cairo ; H.Q., Levant Base, at Alexandria. Such complexity could not long continue. General Altham became the Inspector-General of Communications, under Sir Archibald Murray. The Levant Base disappeared as an independent administration. Sir John Maxwell proceeded home ; and, on 19th March, 1916, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and the Force in Egypt were amalgamated to constitute the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

During December, 1915, and January, 1916, the concentration of troops in Syria was confirmed Their numbers were estimated at 250,000 and the Turks were seriously at work developing the water supply in Sinai and extending the railway from Beersheba. The German Flying Corps with the Turks was increased, and our machines were outclassed all through 1916. In Mesopotamia, too, the Turks were very alert. General Townshend was shut in at Kut, the 3rd and 7th Indian Divisions from France, and the 13th Division (General Maude's) from Egypt, were diverted to the Tigris. Two attempts to relieve Kut, in January and March, failed.

The Western Desert Arabs, who had been driven off the northern coast of Egypt, but who were still assisted with arms and money conveyed by submarine through the Italian Tripoli coast, were still troublesome. And, in March and April, they invaded the oases of Farafra, Dakhla and Khargha, and threatened the Nile valley. The Sultan of Darfur also was drawn in ; Ali Dinar repudiated the suzerainty of Egypt, and raided into the Sudan province of Kordofan. In fact, in the spring of 1916, the Turk had made Egypt anxious for her frontiers on all sides.

But the Grand Duke Nicholas' invasion of Armenia, and capture of Erzerum in February, and later of Trebizond, obliged the Turks to draw reinforcements largely from Syria ; and their forces there became reduced from 250,000 to 60,000 in March, 1916, and their offensive towards Egypt was delayed.

Occupation of the Katia-Romani Area. (See *Plate* IV.)—Sir A. Murray had been directed to maintain as active a defence as possible, compatible with ensuring that no formed bodies of the enemy came within artillery range of the Suez Canal. And, as soon

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as he settled into his G.Q.H. at Ismailia, he reviewed the existing plan left by Lord Kitchener in November. The whole front was reconnoitred, and especially the area about Katia-Romani. It became clear that this water-bearing area offered far greater accommodation for large numbers of troops than had been previously realized. It was essential to any enemy advance in strength against Egypt. It afforded a place of assembly within two marches of the Suez Canal. Besides, it was established that Kossaima and El Arish wells were the two key points to the Sinai desert. It seemed preferable to guard the 45 miles between these two points with mobile troops, rather than to anchor some 11 divisions in the Suez Canal fortifications, over 80 miles long. The desert may be a formidable obstacle, but it also affords a valuable screen for the enemy's moves.

Sir A. Murray decided as a first step to deny the Katia-Romani area to the enemy, and to occupy it at once. A force of a division of infantry, and another of mounted troops there, would enable the elaborately fortified belt in the desert to be abandoned, and the troops in Egypt to be reduced. As a first step, Yeomanry were moved out to the wells at Katia. Sir A. Murray proposed to reduce to seven the 13 divisions then in this command—six divisions were re-embarked for France, Salonika, or Mesopotamia by the end of March, 1916.

At this time, steps were taken to assemble three Australian and New Zealand mounted brigades into one formation—the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division. This division concentrated at Salhia early in April, and four T.F. Horse Artillery batteries furnished its artillery.

On 11th April, a reconnaissance and raiding column set out from near Ismailia to Jifjaffa—52 miles. (One squadron, a light horse regiment, some Bikaneer Camel Corps, engineers, a pack wireless set, and camel transport.) The enemy post at Jifjaffa was surrounded, 16 Turks were killed, the Austrian officer in charge and 33 others were captured, and the camp and water-boring plant destroyed. Our losses were one man, one horse killed. The column covered 120 miles in three-and-a-half days and the utility of cavalry for desert work was fully established.

A railway was necessary for the supply of the divisions destined for the Romani area. The standard gauge was decided on, fortunately; for a narrow gauge would never have sufficed for the subsequent traffic. The local water was supplemented by a pipeline for Nile water, as the former had proved unsuitable for British troops. These works were commenced in April. This small beginning opened the offensive from Egypt. The initiative passed to us, which took us on, through Palestine and Syria, to the Taurus and Upper Euphrates.

The Turks now undertook one enterprise. On 24th April, at

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0500 hours, a flying column of 2,000 Turks, stiffened with Germans, successfully surprised our advanced posts at Oghratina and Katia. In all, three squadrons of Yeomanry were captured. A similar surprise by 1,000 Turks against Dueidar, held by a mixed detachment of Royal Fusiliers and Indian troops, totally failed. The enemy left 70 dead and 25 prisoners in our hands. We have it on German authority that the object of these big raids was to demonstrate to our leaders the danger to the Suez Canal, and to discourage the withdrawal of divisions from Egypt. But Sir A. Murray had already sent away 150,000 men.

During the hot weather, from May to July, numerous long-distance reconnaissances and raids were undertaken by detachments of mounted troops, and much experience was gained. The conditions were arduous. The travelling was all over sand and rocks. The heat was often intense, especially during the periods of scorching Khamsin, or sandstorm. The only shelter was in the scattered palm groves—called Hods. Water was the greatest difficulty. The Arab wells were always fouled, and unfit for our use, and often were too saline for horses. The horses had to be acclimatized to go unwatered for long periods; often 24 hours, occasionally as much as 60 hours. On the flat desert, horses got along well; but, in the big sand dunes they sank up to the hocks. Generally, vehicles were given up and camel transport used. Guns were moved by means of pedrails—a device akin to the "Parson's chain" for motor tyres—consisting of stout squares of planking, 2½ in. by 12 in. by 12 in., linked to each wheel by two circumferential chains. Teams were eight horses, one pair wheels, three in centre, and three leaders.

The Second Turkish Advance.—From June onwards, the Turks—no longer anxious about Bagdad—proceeded with their greater attack on the Suez Canal. Germany and Austria gave effective help, especially in aircraft and howitzers. The first step was to evict us out of the Katia-Romani ground. The expedition was led by Kress von Kressenstein, the Bavarian colonel who had previously organized the 1915 attack. (*Plate* IV.)

The Turkish force consisted of the 3rd and part of the 23rd Divisions (15 battalions), two batteries of mountain artillery, heavy artillery (which was late in arriving), engineers, and two companies of Camel Corps.

In all, about 18,000 men set out from Shellal, near Beersheba, on the 9th July, and, marching rapidly 120 miles, were in Abd and Oghratina by the 19th July. Here they remained in the palm groves, moving little. It was obvious that either they were awaiting more echelons, or they intended to stay to block our further advance. As soon as the Turks appeared at Abd, they were kept under close observation by the 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade, whose orders were to watch, harass and delay any advance; to cover

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the right or southern flank of the infantry back at Romani; and, when opportunity offered, to envelop the left flank of the Turks.

The 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade took turn at this task. Sir A. Murray at once prepared to take the offensive, so as to be ready by full moon on 13th August.

On 3rd August, the Turks occupied Katia and Rabah, and pushed back our screen of mounted troops. The 2nd Australian Light Horse with two regiments covered the three-mile front from Khatib Gannit to Hod-el-Enna, leaving one regiment in reserve at Romani.

Battle of Romani.—The troops in this left section of the Canal defences were commanded by Major-General H. A. Lawrence at Kantara. He had the 52nd and 42nd, and Australian and New Zealand Mounted Divisions, and some Yeomanry (seven infantry brigades, six mounted brigades, nine batteries), altogether about 30,000 men. Three of the four brigades, with the 52nd Division in front, were entrenched on a seven-mile position, facing east, from Khatib Gannit to the sea at Mehemdia. Five battalions were in general reserve south of the railway, about Etmaler. The mounted troops formed a line along the sand dunes, facing south, parallel to the railway. The brigades of the 42nd Division were echeloned along the railway from Kantara to Pelusium. General Lawrence's intention was to await the Turkish attack, involve the enemy in the heavy sand, and counter-attack with the 42nd Division and dismounted troops.

Von Kressenstein's plan, broadly, was to hold us in front, and to drive in our right, and cut in on the railway between Kantara and Romani. At midnight, on 3rd–4th August, the Turks advanced, supported by artillery about Bir Abu Hamra. Our right extended south further than they knew; and their troops, intended to interpose behind our Romani force, lost touch with their main attack, and got involved in very heavy ground, as our commanders expected. The Turkish frontal attack gained some ground at first, but the British counter-attack from the direction of Mt. Royston, Dueidar and Pelusium was successful. The enemy fell back in disorder, especially his left. The mounted troops were sent in pursuit, but the difficulties of ground, weather (August) and water, were too great for them; and the infantry could not follow up effectually. The Turks, well covered by rearguards, rallied at El Abd, and turned on the pursuers and checked them. The enemy lost about 5,000 killed and wounded. The British took about 4,000 prisoners.

In comparison with February, 1915, this attack was a disaster for the Turks. Von Kressenstein had lost 50 per cent. of his force and much material. The British kept the initiative, and Egypt was never threatened again.

In this advance, the Turks brought up their heavy guns by spreading palm branches and mats on the sand. At the same time the British began to develop the "wire road," made of two layers

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of rabbit netting, 12 ft. to 16 ft. wide, tightly pegged out at the sides. Infantry, cycles, and Ford cars travelled easily over sand covered with this wire; but mounted troops or ordinary touring cars destroyed it. Hundreds of miles of such road were put down during 1917 and 1918.

Other Events in the Egyptian Theatre during 1916.—In June, 1916, the Sherif of Mecca, long restive under the rule of the Turks, led the Arabs of the Hedjaz in revolt. Jeddah was taken on 12th June, Mecca soon after, and Taif surrendered on 23rd September. Only Medina resisted, and was blockaded by the Arabs.

In the Sudan, Sir R. Wingate sent a force under Colonel Kelly to settle with Ali Dinar, Sultan of Darfur. The Egyptian Army troops defeated the Sultan's army, about 5,000 strong, outside El Fasher on 23rd May. Ali Dinar escaped with 2,000 men, but was followed up and killed on 5th November. In the western desert the Western Frontier Force penetrated to the Baharia oasis on 19th October, and then occupied in turn all the western oases and eradicated the pro-Turk element. The chief Senussi leader fled to Siwa just before our troops entered Baharia.

The oasis of Siwa was the key to all the western desert oases, and hitherto it had been considered inaccessible to attack in force. Siwa lies 200 miles from the coast, over a hard but waterless desert. The experience gained in the previous two years with Rolls-Royce and Ford cars had proved that such deserts could now be negotiated with suitable mechanical transport. A column under General Hodgson was formed and equipped with armoured cars, Ford vans, and light lorries. These crossed the 200 miles of desert in a few hours, drove the Senussi out of Siwa, and occupied that oasis on 5th February, 1917. This finally settled the Western Desert trouble.

After the Battle of Romani, Sir A. Murray decided to clear the Sinai Peninsula of Turks and to reoccupy El Arish. All the troops on the east of the Suez Canal were placed under Sir Charles Dobell and constituted the Eastern Force. The 42nd, 52nd and Australian and New Zealand Mounted Divisions, under Sir Philip Chetwode, were formed into the Desert Column to advance on El Arish. This advance was to be deliberate, accompanied by the standard-gauge railway, and a 6-in. pipe line from Kantara. Subsequently, a 12-in. pipe was ordered from America.

The railway advanced about 20 miles a month. El Abd, Salmana, and Mazar were occupied in turn; and just as the Desert Column was about to attack El Arish, the Turks evacuated it on 20th December and retreated up the Wadi el Arish. The British Forces occupied El Arish at once, and the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division pursued and surrounded the Turks at Maghdaba on 23rd December, and captured the bulk of their troops.

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The Turks also had garrisoned and entrenched the old frontier post at Rafa. This entrenchment was surprised by Sir P. Chetwode's Desert Column on 11th January, after a 29-mile night march. The garrison resisted stubbornly; reinforcements were hurrying down to them from Shellal, and our open flank was threatened. The New Zealand Mounted Rifles stormed the main redoubt, and then the rest of the Turks surrendered. The Desert Column took 1,000 prisoners, and withdrew to El Arish.

The Turks now abandoned the defensive position at Weli Sheikh Nuran in front of Shellal. The Desert Column remained about El Arish during January and February, while the railway was being brought up. The advantage of sea power and communication was now reaped, for El Arish drew part of its supplies by sea, landed on the open beach.

Comments.—It is worth noticing that the operations in the North-Western and Sinai Deserts were carried out under very differing conditions. In the former case, the troops were scratch formations, far from their base, ill-equipped, precariously supplied, and floundering in mud and water. They engaged the enemy and beat him, but were unable to pursue so as to reap the fruits of victory. In Sinai, at Romani, the troops were in proper formations, they had a railway; all the resources of Egypt were at their elbow; their physical difficulties were drought and sand. The mounted troops were able to pursue, and large captures were made, but the infantry were unable to back up their mounted troops, so that the pursuit was soon checked, and after four days of anxiety, the enemy was able to retire unmolested with most of his artillery. Later on, the advance became deliberate, depending for progress upon the railway construction, and the opportunity arose of the mass employment of mounted troops in cutting off retreating forces, as at Maghdaba, and in cutting out an isolated detachment, in the case of Rafa.

The Lines of Communication.—A detailed description of the remarkable services organized for the advance through Sinai, and into Palestine, is beyond the scope of this narrative in outline. The following, however, contained features of peculiar interest, a few of which can be touched upon.

The Military Railway was constructed, operated and maintained by Railway Companies, R.E. Much assistance was furnished by the Egyptian State Railways; rolling stock was lent, branch lines in Egypt were pulled up to provide rails, sleepers and bridges, and the workshops of Bulac did most of the heavy repairs for locomotives and vehicles. All the heavy labour was furnished by the Egyptian Labour Corps, whose railway companies (at one time 26,000 men) became skilled in bank work and track-laying. The line, of standard gauge, was carried along at a rate of about 20 miles a month—as much as two miles being sometimes completed in one

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day. From Kantara to the Wadi Ghuzzee the line was 140 miles long, and the branch line from Rafa to Shellal, 17 miles. When Palestine was entered, the Turkish railway of 3 ft. 6 in. gauge had to be adapted for our use ; and ultimately it was converted to standard gauge (4 ft. 8½ in.). Light railways were built in front of Gaza, and later on used extensively in Palestine. These lines were of 2 ft. 6 in. and 60-cm. gauges.

The water supply of the troops depended upon the development of wells, and conveyance of the water by train, by camel convoy, and by pipe-line. Moreover, the water thus provided had often to be filtered and chlorinated. In the coastal area of Sinai, water is generally obtained by digging shallow wells in the sand close to the sea shore, or in the wadi beds. The supplies thus procured are scanty and saline. This water served for the animals, but it was unsuitable for constant use by troops ; and even the railway locomotives could not use it without loss of efficiency. At first, Nile water was brought out by train. Then pipe-lines—6-in., 8-in., and 12-in.—were laid and followed railhead from Romani to Deir-el-Belah. The water was distributed to the troops by camel convoy from railhead ; each camel carried two 12½-gallon tanks, known as *fanatis*. Much water development was done in the vicinity of the Wadi Ghuzzee. Large reservoirs were built at Deir-el-Belah, Tel-el-Jemmi, Abu Sitta, Khan Yunus, Shellal, and Rafa. A quarter-of-a-million gallons of water daily were available for supply to the troops in October, 1917, and could be transferred by large pipe-lines to the distribution centres in need of it.

The Camel Transport Corps in 1917 amounted to 35,000 camels, organized in companies, each of about 2,000 camels. These companies were employed as first-line transport with Corps, or further in rear for convoy duty, bringing up supplies and stores from railhead to the fighting troops. The casualties in 1917 in camels were about 9 per cent. ; and again the camel showed his capacity for work under varying and adverse conditions, and his imperturbability under shell-fire. Donkey transport also proved very useful. Four companies, each of 2,000 donkeys, were formed, and the Egyptian donkey proved to be hardy and reliable on service.

The Egyptian Labour Corps provided over 55,000 labourers during 1917. The company organization was adopted, but the working unit was the " gang " of 50 men with headman ; 12 gangs formed one company and, as a rule, the men of a gang all belonged to one village. The work carried out was very varied in character. The E.L.C. made the roads, laid the pipe-lines, built the railway embankments, loaded the trains, manned the surf boats, stowed or discharged the cargoes of supply and storeships, and were employed everywhere on conservancy duties. Every service and department gratefully made use of this valuable Corps.

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CHAPTER V.

PALESTINE: THE FIRST OFFENSIVE. THE FIRST AND SECOND BATTLES OF GAZA.

Events in Mesopotamia, etc., early in 1917.—Simultaneously with Sir A. Murray's advance to the border of Palestine, General Maude, in Mesopotamia, had struck at the Turks at Kut on 13th December. The Turks there were kept very busy in January and February, 1917, so that their High Command were not disposed to reinforce their Palestine front.

On 24th February, the Turks were driven from Kut; and a fortnight later General Maude had evicted them from Bagdad; and the loss of Bagdad was an immense blow to Turkish pride, prestige and resources. In order to keep up the pressure on Turkey, and especially as Russia was in difficulty and faced with Revolution, our higher command now decided on a further advance into Palestine; and Sir A. Murray was directed to press the Turks to the utmost—and directly.

The French took special interest in Palestine and Syria, and, as soon as it was decided to enter Palestine, it became necessary to arrive at a clear understanding with France, and delimit the extent of her territorial interests. Sir Mark Sykes, who had made a study of the political problems of Mesopotamia and Syria, and M. Picot, formerly French Consul at Beirut, were empowered to confer. The agreement which they arrived at has since been the subject of much controversy. Broadly, under this agreement, Great Britain got a free hand in Palestine, and a French contingent of all arms was to be attached to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The French territorial interests in Syria were recognized by us, but the agreement did not take into consideration—sufficiently to satisfy the Arabs—the possibility, which afterwards arose, of the formation of a separate Arab State centred in Damascus. The Arab movement at that time (May, 1917) was in a very nebulous condition.

Natural Features of the South Palestine Frontier.—Palestine is made up of a great mountain ridge running north and south, rising to 3,500 ft. On the east, it falls very steeply to the trough of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. On the north and west, the spurs

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run down gradually to the three great plains of Esdraelon, Sharon, and Philistia. The mountain ridge has been compared to the skeleton of a flat fish. All the spurs run out at right angles to the main ridge or back-bone, and render very difficult the advance of a large force along it through Judea and Samaria. Only one road traverses this mountain ridge from north to south, passing through Nazareth, Afule, Nablus, Jerusalem and Hebron, to Beersheba; and one road runs across it from west to east from Jaffa, through Jerusalem to Jericho.

The coastal plain of Philistia, on the south-west and south of the Judean Hills, is for the most part rolling downland. It has ample water for local needs from wells, and a regular rainfall from November to March. It is under crops from April to June. The inhabitants are partly Arabs with flocks, and partly village Fellahin.

There are many tracks over this area which, in dry weather, are passable for vehicles.

The principal roads over the Plain of Philistia are :—

(*a*) Jaffa-Ramleh to Gaza, keeping near the coast ;
(*b*) Jerusalem to Gaza, *via* Latrun ;
(*c*) Gaza to Beersheba.

All these roads were metalled in parts, but unfit to carry heavy traffic. The plain is about 15 to 20 miles across, but widens between Gaza and Beersheba to some 35 miles, and then merges into the Sinai Desert in a sandy scrub, with sparse cultivation when the soil admits.

The Judean Hills drain across the Plain of Philistia to the Mediterranean, and cut a series of deep *wadis* (dry in summer). The most important of these enters the sea six miles south of Gaza and, running north-west for the last 25 miles of its course, is known as the Wadi Ghuzzee. Its extensions penetrate far inland. The Wadis Saba and Khalil run past Beersheba and skirt the Hebron road. Two other branches, the Wadis Sheria and Khalassa, provide alignments for the railway to the north and the road to the south of Beersheba, respectively. The Wadi Ghuzzee resembles the Wadi el Arish in its spates ; but they are more violent in character. The banks are usually precipitous, its bed is 100 to 300 yards wide and often stony. Water is obtainable in it by digging, especially near the coast, and there are perennial springs at intervals : Shellal, Tel-el-Jemmi, etc.

Beersheba and Gaza are the two historical gateways into Palestine. Gaza, in particular, has seen many armies pass over it, and has endured many sieges and sacks. The city of Gaza (see *Plate* V) is built on a plateau about 200 ft. high, about two miles inland, and separated from the sea by a belt of sand hills. On the

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north-east and east are cultivated downlands, whose ridges at first tend to run parallel to the coast. The country becomes rocky and arid by Sheria, as the foothills of the Judean range are approached. The Gaza plateau is irrigated on the south and south-west of the city, and the plots and paths are surrounded by dense cactus hedges. On the south-east and south-west are two prominent features, Ali-Muntar and Samson Ridge, respectively. The former is a conical hill, dominating the surrounding plateau and the city. Samson Ridge marks the boundary between the sand dunes and the cultivation. To the south of Ali-Muntar, over some 5,000 yards of open ground, lie the Mansura Ridge and Sheikh Abbas, whence the ground falls to the Wadi Ghuzzee, and it becomes much intersected and water-worn. At Sheikh Abbas, the ridge turns south-east and so the high ground forms a salient.

Across the Wadi Ghuzzee, the hills of Inseirat rise sharply to about 400 ft., and are scored with lesser water-courses, which afford good cover from view. All the ground, except in the sand hills by the coast, is easy to dig in and stands up well, while dry. The country between Gaza and the Wadi Sheria offers little obstacle to mounted troops, but is almost devoid of water.

The First Battle of Gaza.—In the middle of January, 1917, the troops about El Arish comprised the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, and 42nd, 52nd, and 53rd Divisions. Besides, we were raising in Egypt the 74th Division and the Imperial Mounted Division. The 42nd Division was under orders to go to France, but was to be replaced by the 54th Division. The whole were known now as the "Eastern Force," under Lieut.-General Sir Charles Dobell.

The situation was remarkable. The Turks still held Auja and Kossaima, about 50 miles up the Wadi el Arish, with some 4,000 men, by means of their light railway from Beersheba and Shellal, based on the Afule-Junction Station-Beersheba main line. They had only small detachments in Khan Yunus, Gaza, and Huj, and about Ascalon—where a landing was feared. The Desert Column had successfully mopped up their outposts at Rafa, and had fallen back to near the Wadi el Arish.

The positions of El Arish, Rafa and Gaza, relative to Kossaima, Auja and Beersheba are interesting. The distance from El Arish to Gaza is no more than from Kossaima to Beersheba; but, if the British could secure Gaza, they would have got behind the Turks' base at Beersheba, and the enemy would have to abandon South Palestine. Gaza was a tempting morsel, but it must be taken by a rush movement.

Just then, Sir Charles Dobell was unable to maintain his troops much beyond El Arish. The railway was not beyond the Wadi, and the available camel transport had only provided for the first

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line needs of the fighting troops in the heavy sand along the coast. No further move could be made until supply depôts had been built up, and train was improvised. But the aspect of the country was changing; the sand dunes were merging into gravel plains and sandy soil, passable for horsed vehicles and light motor transport. Water, too, was plentiful at Rafa and Khan Yunus, and in large pools on the Wadi Ghuzzee, and at Deir-el-Belah in a great lake.

The raid on Rafa alarmed the Turkish command. By the end of January, the enemy cleared out of Auja, and put 5,000 men into Gaza. Besides, they had prepared an entrenched position on a regular glacis facing south-west in front of Shellal. But for all this, Gaza still offered an attractive objective for a *coup de main*.

Sir A. Murray decided to continue the advance by the coast, rather than by Beersheba. He had to cover the construction of the railway, and for this must occupy the line of the Wadi Ghuzzee. At the end of February, after the Desert Column had made a reconnaissance to the Wadi, the Turks abandoned the position they were preparing in front of Shellal; and it seemed likely they would also evacuate Gaza, as they had done at El Arish. The Commander-in-Chief determined, therefore, to advance rapidly on Gaza, as soon as the transport for the move could be ready, and when the railway reached Rafa in the middle of March. He would thus secure the Ghuzzee line, bring the Turks to battle, and, it was hoped, capture the garrison of Gaza. To increase the radius of action of the divisions, 15 improvised trains were assembled; a mixed assortment, consisting of:—

7 camel trains, first line transport (55 camels; 72 tons each train).
6 divisional trains (72 limbered G.S. wagons; 72 tons).
2 mixed horse and motor transport (70 tons each train).

Secrecy and celerity were the essence of the intended operation. The aim was to capture and occupy Gaza before relief could arrive. The supply trains would admit of one day being devoted to the action, no more. If the coup did not come off, the troops must withdraw, to be within reach of their food and ammunition. Once in Gaza, there was plenty of water, and the force would draw supplies by sea.

The plan was to send the mounted troops across the Wadi Ghuzzee to the east and north-east of Gaza, to hold off reinforcements, and to hem in the garrison. The 54th, 53rd and 52nd Divisions were to push into Gaza from the south and south-west from Ali Muntar to Samson Ridge. A detachment advancing up the coast was to cover the left flank.

The divisions were unostentatiously assembled, between Sheikh Zowaid and Rafa, by 24th March. Next day, they were concealed

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in the groves round Khan Yunus; and on the evening of 25th March, they were situated as follows :—

A. and N.Z. Mounted Division Imperial Mounted Division 53rd Division (attached)	}	The Desert Column, at Deir-el-Belah.
54th Division	.. ..	About Inseirat.
52nd Division	.. ..	Khan Yunus.

The main task in the infantry attack was given to the 53rd Division (158th, 159th, and 160th Brigades).

The 54th Division was to be in support on the right; and the 52nd Division was kept in general reserve.

The 53rd Division set out over the plain from Deir-el-Belah about 0100 hours; 158th Brigade leading, in line of battalions in column of route, and had reached El Breij at 0400 hours. A dense fog then came on. At 0435 hours, the leading battalion groped its way over the Wadi Ghuzzee, and on towards its first objective, El Burjaliye, by compass bearing. By 0615 hours, the 158th Brigade had concentrated near El Burjaliye, and it pushed on and occupied Mansura heights at 0745 hours. The fog lifted at 0820 hours, and then the Turks sounded the alarm. But the brigade kept moving, and by 0900 hours it was about 4,000 yards south of Ali Muntar, and, as yet, unopposed.

Meanwhile the 160th Brigade had reached El Sheluf, the top of the rise to the Gaza plateau. The 159th Brigade, in reserve, was following up the 158th Brigade *via* Mansura. On the left, the 2/4th Royal West Kent Regiment had advanced over the Wadi Ghuzzee until held up by Turks in the sandhills about Sheikh Hasan.

The mounted troops had done well. In spite of the fog they effected their march, and reached their positions east and north-east of Gaza by 1000 hours. The Imperial Camel Corps were about Mendur. The Imperial Mounted Division faced east from Gaza. The Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division was at Beit Durdis, with patrols to Huj and Deir Seneid; and the 2nd A.L.H. Brigade was working to the coast through Jelabiyeh and isolating Gaza.

After a conference of brigadiers, orders for the 53rd Division's attack on Ali Muntar were issued at 1100 hours. The 158th Brigade moved from near Mansura at 1140 hours, supported by the 159th Brigade. The 1/5th Royal Welsh Fusiliers were leading, in artillery formation (*i.e.*, lines of platoons, in fours, at 100 yards interval and 300 yards distance: " A " and " B " Cos. leading, " C " and " D " Cos. following). The Turkish artillery opened fire when these

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troops were about 2,000 yards from the enemy on Green Hill, at about 12 noon ; and the brigade got on to within 800 yards of the enemy, in full view, and was then checked. The 159th Brigade now came up on the right (less one battalion in Divisional Reserve).

At 1300 hours, to hasten matters, the A. and N.Z. troops had been ordered to close in on Gaza, and by about 1530 hours their pressure took effect. The 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade from the north actually broke into Gaza ; and the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade penetrated into the suburbs from the east.

About Ali Muntar and Green Hill the whole line moved on at 1345 hours, and got to within 500 yards of the trenches, under very heavy fire. The 160th Brigade had now come up and were attacking on the left. At 1530 hours, the 158th Brigade pierced the enemy defences by Ali Muntar Mosque, and took many prisoners ; but at Green Hill the Turks held on stubbornly. About 1600 hours, the 161st Brigade of the 54th Division was brought across from Sheikh Abbas, and put in on the left of the 158th Brigade. It attacked Green Hill, well supported by the artillery, and carried its objective just as the sun set. Von Kressenstein at Huj was encouraging Gaza to hold out, and by 1700 hours his reinforcements were pressing the Imperial Mounted Division, until only a gap of four miles remained for the Australian and New Zealand Division to get back through.

At 1630 hours, the situation was as follows : Gaza was enveloped, nearly all the Turkish trenches outside it had been taken. The 53rd Division held the Ali Muntar Ridge, but their right was covered only by a thin line of mounted troops.

The 54th Division's left was 2⅛ miles from the 53rd Division's right. The Australian and New Zealand Division—much extended —was engaged in street fighting, except one brigade which was holding off the Turkish reinforcements from the north. The Imperial Mounted Division was resisting the Turks from the north-east and east, and south-east, and under artillery fire. Many horses had been 36 hours without water. It was, therefore, necessary to bring in the mounted divisions ; and it was then considered unsafe to leave the infantry on the captured ground with their flank exposed.

So, about 1830 hours, Sir C. Dobell ordered the 53rd and 54th Divisions to take up a line from Gaza on the left through Mansura and El Burjaliye, refusing our right. Thus we gave up the commanding position gained. Turkish reinforcements entered Gaza that night.

Next morning, although our advanced troops reoccupied Ali Muntar, the 53rd Division was unable to keep it against the violent Turkish counter-attack delivered at 0800 hours. The 54th Division also was attacked from Sheikh Abbas.

The time limit for the operation had arrived ; the troops could

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not be maintained so close to Gaza ; and during the night 27th–28th March, the force fell back to Deir-el-Belah and Khan Yunus to replenish and refit.

Although the commanders did not know it at the time, victory had been in our grasp. The Turks in Gaza had lost heart, and the German Commandant had burnt his papers, bid farewell to his friends, and destroyed his wireless station.

The course of the action remarkably resembled that of the two preceding actions, Maghdaba and Rafa. In each case the enemy was surprised, but resisted stubbornly until his reinforcements were at hand, and the breaking-off of the action was under serious consideration. Only, in the case of Gaza, the risks of continuing the attack seemed to outweigh the offers of success. The two hours of daylight, lost in the morning by the fog, could never be made up, and Gaza was not taken until seven months later, under very altered conditions. Here certainly was a case in which fog had favoured the defence by its delaying power.

The Second Battle of Gaza.—Immediate steps were taken to prepare to continue the attack on Gaza. The railway was extended to Deir-el-Belah by 5th April, and also supplies were landed there on the open beach from suitable vessels, with surf boats. Much was done in opening up roads and crossing places over the Wadi Ghuzzee, and in developing the water supply.

Lieut.-General Sir Charles Dobell was reinforced with the newly-raised 74th Division, formed from Yeomanry regiments dismounted ; and the assistance of the Navy was secured for the next assault.

The difficulties Russia was now encountering also obliged us to maintain pressure on the Turks ; and the second attempt on Gaza was accelerated for this cause ; in fact, Sir A. Murray received orders on 30th March to advance on Jerusalem. The next attack was fixed for the 17th April.

The Turks were thoroughly roused and elated, and gave up all idea of evacuating territory. The garrison of the Gaza area was raised to 20,000 or 25,000 rifles (3rd Cavalry Division, 16th, 27th, 53rd and 54th Turkish Divisions, and much heavy artillery). The immediate defences were greatly strengthened and extended south-west, some 12,000 yards to Atawineh ; and beyond that, a chain of strong works stretched to Hareira and Sheria, for about 16 miles towards Beersheba. About 8,500 rifles were kept in Gaza itself. No opening was left for mounted troops to pass through, and the watering difficulties prevented a wide envelopment. The enemy reserves were held on the north-east of Gaza, about Huj and on the Wadi el Hesi.

The plan now was to attack Gaza in two stages. The first step was to reoccupy the Sheikh-Abbas-Mansura ridge, consolidate

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there and bring up the tanks and heavy artillery. The second move would be to subject the Turks to a severe bombardment, and then to deliver the assault.

The first stage opened at dawn on 17th April. By 0700 hours, the 54th and 52nd Divisions had crossed the Wadi and taken Sheikh Abbas and Mansura Ridges and Kurd Hill. On the right, the mounted troops about Shellal reconnoitred in force towards Hareira and Sheria, in order to hold the enemy to his ground there. At dark, these troops fell back across the Wadi Ghuzzee, but covered the right flank of the 54th Division with an outpost line. So far the operations had gone well.

The next stage was fixed for 19th April. The 54th and 52nd Divisions, under G.O.C., 52nd Division, were to take Ali-Muntar, the 54th Division had also to deal with part of the Kh. Sihan group of works, south-east of Gaza. The 53rd Division had to move up the sand dunes between the Belah-Gaza road and the sea, its first objective being the line Samson Ridge-Sheikh Ajlin. The mounted troops were to attack (dismounted) the trenches at Atawineh, and to seize the Birket-el-Sana spur across the Wadi Sheria.

The mounted divisions moved at dawn. Birket-el-Sana was taken and the Atawineh lines were attacked by the Imperial Mounted Division, but without material progress. On the right of the 54th Division, the Imperial Camel Corps ejected the Turks from one line of the Kh. Sihan trenches. The 54th Division made progress at first, but came under severe enfilade fire from Ali-Muntar, and was heavily counter-attacked and checked. The 52nd Division got up to Lee's Hill, but could not cross the open space to the west and north-west in face of machine-guns. The tanks, from which much had been expected, were unlucky, and several sustained direct hits. But the 53rd Division, moving along the coast, secured Samson Ridge by 1500 hours.

By that time, the situation was that the attack had been brought to a standstill. Two of the brigades of the 52nd Division, and all the 74th Division, had not been seriously engaged. But the enemy was unbroken ; he was still in possession of the Ali-Muntar works ; and his strong reserves were seen to be still intact. Our casualties, so far, had amounted to about 7,000, and it was considered that the time had not come yet to put in the reserves. No further progress was made. The ground gained on this day was consolidated. The line now ran from the Wadi Ghuzzee round the Sheikh Abbas salient, Mansura-Samson Ridge-Sheikh Ajlin. The further assault intended for the next day was countermanded, as the conclusion reached was that the Turkish defences and forces were too strong to be overcome except by very deliberate process.

After the Second Battle of Gaza, Lieut.-General Sir P. Chetwode succeeded Sir Charles Dobell in command of the Eastern Force.

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Position warfare set in on the Gaza front from Tel-el-Jemmi to the sea. Inland from the Tel-el-Jemmi, the hostile lines diverged east and west from the Wadi Ghuzzee. The country was open, but movement was restricted by the summer water-scarcity. Neither side could effectively attack the other across the open space.

The Turks were strongly reinforcing Gaza; they now proposed to hold us on the Palestine front, while they concentrated their Yilderim Army for the recapture of Bagdad. In order to maintain the Gaza fortress, they began in May a branch railway from Tine (near Junction Station) to Gaza.

At the same time, the British, working for power to manœuvre, and to secure the upper line of the Wadi Ghuzzee, commenced a branch railway from Rafa to Shellal—where there was ample water—and also extended the pipe-line on to the plateau overlooking Shellal from the west.

Moreover, as it was evident that large reinforcements, especially in artillery, would be required for the reduction of Gaza, the double tracking of the railway from Kantara was decided on and commenced; and the 12-in. pipe was also to be duplicated between Rafa and Kantara.

Destruction of the Auja-Beersheba Railway.—The Turks had abandoned their Sinai railway extension at the end of January; but in May they began to pick up the rails and sleepers in order to use them on their new branch line from Tine to Gaza. Sir Philip Chetwode decided to stop this work, and to do so organized a large destructive raid by mounted troops. The Imperial Camel Corps at Rafa, one brigade of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, two field squadrons, and R.H.A. were detailed for the operation. A large number of demolition parties were specially trained and drilled to rapid work. In order to confuse the enemy, the Gaza defences were subjected to severe bombardment and wire-cutting for three days prior to the enterprise; and on the day of the raid, the remainder of the mounted troops made a reconnaissance in force to the north-west of Beersheba, and destroyed the Irgeig railway viaduct by shell-fire.

The raiding brigades moved out on 22nd May, the Imperial Camel Corps from Rafa direct to Auja. The others moved from near Khan Yunus to Esâni and Khalasa, where they watered, and thence went on to Asluj and Hadaj on the railway. They completely wrecked 13 miles of line. Every pair of rails was cut in the centre, all the points and crossings at Asluj Station, six bridges, and many valuable stores were destroyed. The troops then withdrew unhindered.

Comments.—The outstanding feature of the recovery of Sinai was the energetic offensive initiated by Sir A. Murray. As a result of his enterprise the Turk was wholly driven out of Egypt, east, west,

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and south, and his machinations for revolt brought to nought. Besides, with material British support, the Arabs had destroyed Turkish authority in the Hedjaz. After the defeat at Romani the Turk had displayed no initiative whatever against us.

The success of this offensive—for success it was, notwithstanding the check at Gaza—may be attributed to the *mobility* given to the whole force, and to the development and able use of the mounted divisions—Yeomanry, Australian and New Zealand troops. The mounted arm was constantly employed, in spite of the difficulties of desert, sand, season and water. It was used in reconnaissances, in raids, as a screen, as a mobile reserve, in envelopment, and in pursuit. The Sinai Desert was the training-ground in which these mounted troops were schooled for their later exploits in Palestine and Syria.

The spring of 1917 had certainly been disappointing for the British, but the Turk had cold comfort, too. His prestige in the East was very low; he had been turned out of Sinai, and defeated in the West; two of the holy cities—Bagdad and Mecca—were lost, and he was blockaded in Medina. Nevertheless, he was gathering himself together for a great effort to recover Mesopotamia with German aid.

Just at this time General Sir Edmund Allenby, who had been in command of the 3rd Army of the B.E.F. in France, came out to succeed General Sir Archibald Murray at the end of June.

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CHAPTER VI.

PALESTINE: THE SECOND OFFENSIVE. THE CAPTURE OF BEERSHEBA AND GAZA.

GENERAL SIR EDMUND ALLENBY assumed the command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force on 28th June, 1917, when the general situation locally was as follows:—

In the Sudan and Western Desert all was clear. The Abyssinians had reaffirmed their friendliness. Siwa had been garrisoned. Only on the north coast we were troubled by enemy submarines lurking and collecting information of our shipping through the canal. Egypt itself was quiet.

The Arabs in the Hedjaz had steadily gained ground and adherents. Medinà alone had resisted their attacks; but the Hedjaz railway was continually being interrupted by their action. The Emir Feisal's army was to be moved up the Red Sea coast to Akaba, to be still more on the flank of the Turkish line of communications with Medina.

On the Palestine front there had been a deadlock in May and June. The Turks had greatly reinforced and extended that front since the Second Battle of Gaza, and had dug and wired themselves in; and the British had done the same. In front of Gaza, position warfare prevailed. Our right flank was open, but we could not move there for lack of water and transport.

In Mesopotamia, the Turks had set themselves in earnest to retake Bagdad, and the Yilderim Army had been formed. Germany had appointed von Falkenhayn to the chief command, and had provided an Asia Corps and much material for these operations.

Sir Edmund Allenby had been instructed to report on the conditions under which offensive operations against the Turks in Palestine might be undertaken. He very soon went up to that front, and personally reconnoitred the country from south-west of Beersheba to Sheikh Ajlin. He reported that, given a force of seven infantry and three mounted divisions, Gaza and Beersheba could be attacked with the prospect of reaching Jerusalem. The chief reinforcements immediately required were:—

Two fully-trained divisions;
Eleven 18-pdr. and 4·5-in. howitzer batteries;
Six groups of heavy artillery;
Three squadrons of R.F.C.

In fulfilment of these demands the 60th and 10th Divisions were

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transferred from Salonika; some heavy artillery from Italy, and most of the remainder from the United Kingdom, and also Indian Cavalry from France.

The Turkish Position, Gaza-Beersheba (*Plates* VI and VII).—The country between Gaza and Beersheba constitutes the southern edge of the Plain of Philistia, and may be termed "open" ground of varying character, as it changes from the sea-coast sand dunes of Philistia to the rocky limestone spurs of the Judean Hills.

Further east, after Sheria, the rolling downlands merge into bare sandy hillocks, and rocky outcrops, which rise into rough and arid hills, 1,200 ft. to 1,500 ft. high. This ground, east of Wadi Sheria, is difficult for transport and offers no overhead cover. Tel-el-Khuweilfeh and Towal Abu Jerwal, respectively 12 and 6 miles north of Beersheba, are prominent outlying features of the Hebron range. South and south-west of Beersheba is a lower, but very similar, block of limestone hills, devoid of water, which extends for about eight miles towards the upper Wadi Ghuzzee.

Beersheba itself is about 900 ft. above the sea, and lies in a hollow. The town is dominated by Tel-es-Saba on the east, Ras Ghanam on the south, and Hill 1070 on the south-west. Six roads converge on Beersheba. Three of these, Jerusalem-Hebron, the Gaza, and the Asluj roads, had been roughly metalled, and could be used for motor traffic. The other roads were only well-worn tracks, all passable by horsed vehicles and light cars, but with steep crossings at the big *wadis*. All this country is drained by three affluents of the Wadi Ghuzzee, viz.:—

Wadi Sheria, which crossed the Turkish line at Hareira;
Wadi Imleh, which crossed the Beersheba railway at Irgeig;
Wadi Saba, which passes through Beersheba itself and comes down from Hebron.

All these *wadis* are torrent beds, with steep-cut sides—5 to 30 ft. high—and stony floors.

Wadi Ghuzzee, under various names, falls south-south-east towards Shellal, after passing through Khalasa, Asluj, Esani and Gamli. Patriarchal springs and wells exist at all those places, and water could be speedily developed with modern appliances.

West of Shellal, the country formed a sandy plateau, falling gently to the sea. It was passable, but not easily, by horsed vehicles, and on swept tracks by light Ford vans and motor-cars—but not by motor-lorries.

East of Shellal was a broad cultivated plain, famous for its barley, which extended through Karm to Towal-el-Habari. It afforded fairly good going for all transport, including motor-lorries, and it boasted a few wells.

By July, 1917, Gaza had become a well-armed, equipped, and garrisoned fortress. To prevent its envelopment, the Turks had

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constructed a chain of strongly entrenched localities, extending almost to Beersheba, along 30 miles of front. Besides the works immediately covering Beersheba, there were five other systems of redoubts: Kauwukah, Hareira, Baha, Atawineh, Sihan. These works supported each other, except on the extreme left of the Turks, where a gap of about 4½ miles occurred between the Kauwukah and the Beersheba defences.

The Turkish communications in rear were fairly good. The Gaza-Beersheba road connected up these groups, and the country north of it generally was passable for horsed transport. The Wadi Surar Junction-Beersheba Railway (3 ft. 6 in. gauge) passed through Sheria and the Tine-Gaza branch was completed to the Wadi Hesi, and was being extended to Army Headquarters and its Reserve Centre at Huj.

The Turkish forces in Southern Palestine consisted of the XXth and XXIInd Corps, with the 3rd Cavalry Division—in all, nine divisions, 25 regiments of infantry and three cavalry regiments—total about 50,000 rifles, 1,500 sabres and 300 guns. These forces at first were under Ahmed Jemal Pasha, G.O.C. IVth Army, with Colonel von Kressenstein as Chief-of-Staff. But, at the end of October, they were brought under the Yilderim Army Group. Then von Kressenstein became G.O.C. VIIIth Army, with Headquarters at Huleikat, and Fezvi Pasha, G.O.C. VIIth Army, with Headquarters at Hebron, and Jemal was passed on to the line of communication.

The British Position and Preparation.—The British line directly in front of Gaza was not much altered at first after the second battle in April. But, above Tel-el-Jemmi, the right flank was pushed up to the Wadi Ghuzzee. The British held Shellal for its water; and, when the railway approached Shellal in July, infantry were moved on to the plain near there, and mounted troops went further up to Tel-el-Fara and Gamli. But the bulk of the depôts and reserves were kept between Rafa and Khan Yunus. The front in July extended for about 22 miles. During the summer, numerous reconnaissances were made east of the Wadi Ghuzzee, and the Turks became accustomed to our troops approaching the Wadis Imleh, Sheria and Saba. These reconnaissances had confirmed that the weakest part of the Turkish chain of defences was between Kauwukah and Irgeig. There was the gap of 4½ miles between the end of the Hareira defences and the beginning of the Beersheba system.

The following considerations affected the selection of the locality for the main assault:—

(*a*) Gaza itself, a naturally strong position, was now heavily armed, entrenched and garrisoned. To pass that fortress would involve hewing a way through by sheer strength of

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artillery. Such operations are unavoidable when no flank is available, but offer no more than local success. If the Turks should elect to retire from Gaza they had as good a position behind the Wadi Hesi, by Deir Seneid.

(*b*) The Atawineh area similarly, if penetrated, offered no substantial advantage.

(*c*) The Hareira-Sheria sector seemed the weak spot. If British troops could reach and overrun it, the whole of the Gaza position would be turned; they would be on the flank of the Turks as they fell back and there would be scope for the large British force of mounted troops.

(*d*) Beersheba had abundant water; but the locality would only be of service as a rendezvous for another bound forward. The place would be an incumbrance if the British were checked there.

(*e*) The conclusion, therefore, was that the main attack ought to be directed against the Turkish left—the defences Sheria-Hareira, but, that it was essential first to seize Beersheba by a surprise, as it was necessary to secure the water, and the space to develop the principal attack.

(*f*) The Turks seemed predisposed to expect that Gaza would still be the objective of the main attack, and, to encourage this belief to the very end, it was determined also to attack Gaza.

Immediately after his return from reconnoitring the Palestine front, Sir E. Allenby reorganized the command, and moved his G.H.Q. from Cairo to near Rafa. The Eastern Force was abolished; and the troops east of the Canal were formed into the XXth Corps, XXIst Corps, Desert Mounted Corps and Palestine Lines of Communication (see *Appendix* I for fighting strengths). Kantara supplanted Alexandria as the principal base; quays for ocean steamers were built along the Suez Canal, and immense depôts of ordnance stores, supplies, and remounts grew up there.

The doubling of the military railway, and of the 12-in. pipe-line was accelerated. Large quantities of mechanical transport were assembled at Kantara to go up the line as soon as they could be utilized.

In the immediate front a great deal of work was put in hand, especially in improving the forward communications and water, and in preparation for heavy artillery reinforcements. Light railways, heavy telegraphs, wire roads, cleared tracks for Ford vans, water cisterns, surf boats—and much of the latest equipment of trench warfare, such as sound-ranging, balloons, listening sets—all were utilized. Throughout the five months of preparation, the

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trench warfare was actively offensive; and the impression gained ground that Gaza again would be subjected to direct assault.

The change of Commander-in-Chief, and the British preparations in the summer, were duly appreciated by the enemy. It is known now that, in August, the German Staff in Palestine concluded that the British would make another effort to break through, and realized that, unless the Turks were very heavily reinforced, the attack would probably succeed. They wished to shorten their line by withdrawing from Beersheba; but Constantinople would neither permit that, nor allow them the troops they requested.

Turkish pride and prestige had been deeply wounded by the loss of Bagdad. The plan to retake it had the backing of Berlin. The Asia Corps was on its way to Mesopotamia. To the appeals of Palestine the reply was:—

> "Every man sent to Sinai decreases the chance of success in retaking Bagdad."

To this the Palestine Command urged:—

> "If the Sinai front is broken, Palestine and Syria will fall into the enemy's hands; and not only will Bagdad not be retaken, but the armies in Mesopotamia will be caught with the British across their lines of communications at Aleppo."

Not until mid-October did this argument prevail, and then it was too late. Von Falkenhayn was in time to supersede Jemal Pasha; and his Yilderim troops, diverted from Mesopotamia, were on their way to Palestine when Sir Edmund Allenby's force captured Beersheba on 31st October.

The general idea of the British operations was to deliver the main blow, in overwhelming force, against the left of the enemy's principal line of defences at Hareira-Sheria. The infantry would then roll up the Turkish line, while the mounted Corps pressed through into Philistia on the enemy's communications. The first step must be the capture of Beersheba; and, to confuse the enemy, Gaza itself was to be subjected to prolonged intensive bombardment, and attacked simultaneously, but with limited objects in view.

Beersheba lay 18 miles from Shellal. The country between was totally devoid of food or forage. The road tracks could not be relied on at first for motor transport. Water was scarce. It was necessary, therefore, to provide special transport to assure supplies and water for the troops operating against Beersheba. It was decided to carry the 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge railway over the Wadi Ghuzzee at Shellal on a trestle-bridge, to strip the XXIst Corps units in front of Gaza of most of their divisional transport, and to build out a pipe-line from the Shellal reservoirs to the concentration area at

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Karm. By this means the XXth Corps and Desert Mounted Corps were given sufficient transport to enable them to move out 20 miles from railhead. About 30,000 camels were utilized in this task.

The plan for the capture of Beersheba was to envelop the place. Two mounted divisions were to attack from north-east, east, and south-east, and two infantry divisions simultaneously were to assault the works on the west and south-west, while a third infantry division covered the left of the main infantry attack. The mounted troops had to make a circuit of 50 miles from Gamli, through Esani, Khalasa, Asluj to Kasim Zanna.

As soon as Beersheba was seized, then Gaza was to be attacked with naval assistance, and two very important localities occupied, while our Beersheba forces were preparing for their next stage—the main attack on Hareira. The Turk was to be kept fully occupied, and yet uncertain as to where the main blow would fall.

Originally, it was expected to deliver the attack near the end of September, but, in waiting for reinforcements, the operations were postponed five or six weeks. Force Order No. 54 was issued on 22nd October, and Zero day was fixed for the 31st (*Appendix* II).

Paras. 5 and 6 of this Operation Order were as follows :—

"5. (*a*) The XXth Corps will move into position during the night Z-I/Zero, so as to attack the enemy at Beersheba on Zero day south of the *wadi* with two divisions, while covering his flank, and the construction of the railway east of Shellal, with one division on the high ground overlooking Wadis el Suffi and Hannafish. The objective of the Desert Mounted Corps will be the enemy's defences from the south-east to the north-east of Beersheba, and the town of Beersheba itself."

"6. The G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps will endeavour to turn the enemy's left with a view to breaking down his resistance at Beersheba as quickly as possible. With this in view, the main weight of his force will be directed against Beersheba from the east and north-east. As soon as the enemy's resistance shows signs of weakening, G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps will be prepared to act with the utmost vigour against his retreating troops, so as to prevent their escape, or at least drive them well beyond the high ground immediately overlooking the town from the north. He will also be prepared to push troops rapidly into Beersheba, in order to protect from damage any wells and plant connected with the water supply not damaged by the enemy before Beersheba is entered. Special instructions will be issued to G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps, and a copy of these instructions will be forwarded for information to G.O.C. XXth Corps."

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Special instructions were issued to G.O.C., Desert Mounted Corps, in which he was informed :—

(*i*) The main attack of the XXth Corps could not be launched earlier than between 1000 and 1100 on Zero day.

(*ii*) The mounted divisions must be east of Beersheba early enough to attack it before the enemy should realize the infantry attack of the XXth Corps.

(*iii*) Men and horses were to be kept as fresh as possible for the second, and principal, stage of their operations, in which their rôle would be to pass round the enemy's left and establish the Corps about Tel-el-Nejile-Wadi Hesi.

Special instructions to the XXth Corps dealt mainly with the action to be taken if the enemy should evacuate Beersheba before we could attack.

The measures taken to mislead the enemy were very carefully elaborated. It must be remembered that the bulk of the troops out of the trench line were kept opposite Gaza, in well-marked camps between Tel-el-Jemmi-Deir-el-Belah, and Rafa. In June, as the force spread out towards Shellal, the detachments on the Wadi Ghuzzee had formed similar camps, to which the Turkish airmen were well accustomed. The Desert Mounted Corps always had a division in rest on the coast, near Khan Yunus. When the assembly marches began in the last week of October, all moves took place at night. The brigades departing always left tents standing, and stepped up to an existing camping ground. Camps which were finally vacated were kept going, and arrangements were made to water horses and to create dust at the usual hours and in the usual places. Thus, the enemy's airmen—who got over only at a great height—saw merely the camps to which they were accustomed and no marked changes in them.

The French contingent had their camps and stores at Khan Yunus. Great camel lines existed near Deir-el-Belah. Extensive light railways had been built, primarily for ammunition supply, conveniently in front of Gaza A dummy main-line station was constructed at the Wadi Ghuzzee crossing, near the Belah-Gaza road. The enemy was also misled by our indiscreet use of wireless—doctored messages in indifferent cipher—and by other information which he prized, but which was not as good as it seemed.

Finally, Gaza was subjected to eight days' continuous bombardment, as had never been before in all Asia. The evidence to the enemy that Gaza was the enemy's main objective was reasonably conclusive, and when the move on Beersheba became obvious, he considered it to be merely a bluff.

Capture of Beersheba.—The steady bombardment of Gaza commenced on 26th October, when the troops began to take post for the

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attack on Beersheba. On the evening of 30th October, the XXth Corps and Desert Mounted Corps were concentrated ready for the night march to their position of deployment. There was a full moon, and the weather was sultry.

The approach movements of the three divisions now with the XXth Corps for this concentration were very carefully screened.

First, an outpost line of the 53rd Division was pushed out on the left, to the north-west of Beersheba.

On the right of the 53rd Division, the Desert Mounted Corps furnished a screen about midway between the Wadi Ghuzzee and Beersheba.

Then, on 29th October, the XXth Corps Cavalry Regiment had replaced the Australians; while that night (29th-30th October) the 60th and 74th Divisions, in brigade groups, were moving across the broken ground in the triangle, Esani-Gamli-Beersheba, and lying up by day in the wadis.

These divisions were given three lines to work to:—A line for deployment, the enemy's trench-line, and the intended outpost-line to be occupied after the assault, and beyond which units were forbidden to pursue. It was a complex manœuvre to move out three divisions like this by night so far, and get them deployed as required without alarming the enemy.

The 74th and 60th Divisions were allotted the hostile works between the Khalasa road and the Wadi Saba; and part of the 53rd Division further north covered the left of the attack. The right of the 60th Division was covered by the 7th Mounted Brigade.

The first step was to seize Hill 1070, in order to enable the guns to be brought up close enough for wire-cutting in front of the inner defences. The 60th Division took Hill 1070 by 0845 hours. Wire-cutting then proceeded, the main assault was delivered at 1215 hours and by 1300 hours the works between the Khalasa road and Wadi Saba were taken." The defences north of that road took longer to secure, but were captured by 1930 hours and the road into Beersheba from the west was then clear. The only troops of the XXth Corps to go that night into Beersheba were part of the 521st Field Co., R.E., sent in to develop the water supply.

The Desert Mounted Corps had a difficult march; they used two roads—very rough roads—and covered from 25 to 35 miles during the night, and commenced their attack to time. Then they met much opposition, and the ground east of the town favoured the defence, being almost flat and commanded by high ground on the north-east and south-east, and flanked by Tel-es-Saba. Progress was slow until about 1830 hours, when the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade (Brig.-General Grant) extended, and galloped over two lines of Turks in trenches, and entered Beersheba.

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Two regiments rode in this attack, which was delivered in three lines, each of two squadrons, and supported by one section of machine-guns. One regiment was in reserve covering the left rear. The brigade captured 1,100 prisoners and 10 guns. They lost 31 killed and 33 wounded. They found the water supply intact; although the wells had been prepared for demolition, the Turks had neglected to fire the charge. The whole operation was a complete success. The Turks were surprised, they were given no time to reinforce, and a very strong position was taken with relatively small loss.

The First Attack on Gaza.—The XXth Corps now required a short time to assemble and deploy for the attack on the Sheria-Hareira defences. Meanwhile, the XXIst Corps was directed to capture the line Umbrella Hill-Sheikh Hasan, a frontage of about 6,000 yards, to a maximum depth of 3,000 yards. It was expected that this attack would draw Turkish reserves towards Gaza.

This operation was executed in two stages. At 2300 hours on 1st November, Umbrella Hill was rushed. The next stage was fixed for four hours later, and for two hours the Turks kept up a heavy bombardment, which closed down just in time for the British assault on Sheikh Hasan to proceed.

The preliminary bombardment by the XXIst Corps had been so destructive that in one division the Turks lost a third of their troops, and were obliged to replace that division by another from the General Reserve. So, the blow on the left also achieved its purpose: it had seriously threatened the whole Gaza sector, it had compelled the Turks to bring reserves into Gaza, and had convinced them that Gaza was the objective of the main attack.

Very sultry weather now set in, and hampered the preparations of the troops about Beersheba, so that an additional day was required to complete them.

The Turkish Counter-stroke North of Beersheba.—While the XXth Corps and the Desert Mounted Corps were making ready, on 1st and 2nd November, the 53rd Division moved out about seven miles north of Beersheba. The 10th Division (General Longley) took post at Irgeig. The Australian Mounted Division relieved the Yeomanry Division in General Reserve.

On 3rd November, the 53rd Division moved on towards Khuweilfeh over difficult country. General Mott now met with strong opposition, and on 4th and 5th November he was counter-attacked. The Turks brought up eight battalions and three cavalry regiments, and repeatedly tried to throw the 53rd Division back on Beersheba, without success.

This attack has been judged to have been a bold effort to induce us to alter our plans and to attract a large force into the hill country up the Hebron road.

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Sir Edmund Allenby's comment was :—

"Had the enemy succeeded in drawing considerable forces against him in that area the result might easily have been an indecisive fight, . . . and my own main striking force would probably have been made too weak effectively to break the enemy's centre in the neighbourhood of Sheria-Hareira. However, the enemy's action was not allowed to make any essential modification to the original plan."

The Break-Through on to the Plain of Philistia.—The attack on the Kauwukah and Rushidi works of the Hareira sector of defences was ordered for dawn on 6th November, and it was intended to secure Sheria and its water by nightfall. The 53rd Division and Imperial Camel Corps continued to be heavily engaged all day on the 6th November, holding off the last of von Kressenstein's counter-stroke at Khuweilfeh.

The 10th and 60th Divisions, supported by the 74th Division (General Girdwood), successfully stormed the Hareira lines; while the Desert Mounted Corps, again rejoined by the Australian Mounted Division, stood by to push into the gap made by the infantry. At 1600 hours, the Desert Mounted Corps started northwards, and later the 60th Division (Major-General Shea) was directed to follow it up into Sheria, which was occupied that evening. Still the enemy was given no respite. The second assault on Gaza was ordered for this night (6th-7th November).

Outpost and Middlesex Hill on our right were to be taken at 2330 hours, and Turtle Hill on the left at 0500 hours. Observe again the successive blows right and left. But the Turk had had enough. That night he withdrew. Only the Atawineh works were still held; Gaza was empty, and some of the XXIst Corps moved through it on 7th November.

It was now the turn of the XXIst Corps to take the road. The 52nd Division (General Hill), preceded by the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-General Harbord), advanced by the coast, drove in the Turkish rearguards, and reached Deir Seneid on the evening of the 8th November. The 75th Division (Major-General Palin) stayed to deal with the Atawineh redoubts, and the 54th Division (Major-General Hare) was left to clear up Gaza itself.

The Desert Mounted Corps was strongly opposed, and made little progress without infantry support. The Cavalry were in difficulties for water, which was in deep wells and its distribution slow. On the night 7th-8th November, the Turks managed to extricate the garrison of Atawineh, before the gap could be closed.

On the 8th November, the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division secured a good water supply at Jemmameh, after obstinate fighting. The Australian Mounted Division, closely supported

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by the 60th Division, marched towards Huj ; and a large amount of Turkish artillery was captured. But, in the afternoon, the 60th Division was checked in open country, about a mile west of Huj, by a strongly-posted Turkish rearguard of about two battalions with well-concealed machine-guns and artillery. Part of the 5th Mounted Brigade were close by, and the G.O.C., 60th Division, called on these troops to charge and clear the way. The 1/1st Warwick Yeomanry (Lieut.-Colonel Cheape), and part of 1/1st Worcester Yeomanry—altogether, ten troops—about 170 sabres—were moved rapidly to the right flank, under shelter of a fold in the ground, unseen by the enemy, to within 800 yards of the flank of the hostile batteries. The Yeomanry then charged home, in three lines ; and, in spite of desperate resistance, cut down the gunners and dispersed the infantry. They captured a field battery, a mountain battery, and four machine-guns. The Yeomanry lost 75 all ranks, killed and wounded, including Lieut.-Colonel Cheape, killed. This gallant action provides a fine example of the cavalry charge ; it was sudden, rapid and opportune ; use was made of the ground, surprise was achieved, and the way was opened for the infantry.

The Turkish VIIIth Army now was in full retreat, northwards. The Royal Flying Corps bombers did much execution against the Turkish columns, crowded on the two roads from Gaza. All reports showed that the enemy was greatly disorganized, and persistent pursuit would complete his rout.

Comments.—This phase of the campaign, leading to the capture of Beersheba, is remarkable in several respects.

First, for the most careful and long preparation devoted to it—July to November—during which time much was done in building railways, organizing transport, developing water, and massing the artillery and other reinforcements.

Next, for the secrecy with which the real plan was shrouded, and preserved from the enemy. And, without this secrecy, the operations would have had little hope of success.

Lastly, these operations are remarkable in that they dealt simultaneously with both stationary and open warfare, and brought in the artillery co-operation of the Royal and Allied navies.

There was Gaza, a stabilized front, and the scene of an extensive bombardment, and of brilliant local operations of trench warfare. And 35 miles away was the rather exposed outpost of Beersheba, secure, apparently, behind a wide belt of arid country, but still open to surprise and seizure by determined mobile troops. It will be noticed that the mounted divisions were used away on the right, in the dry desert, where the ground was suitable for a great enveloping movement.

In the next phase these same mounted divisions were brought across the coast to fight in the fertile plain of Philistia.

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CHAPTER VII.

The Pursuit Across Philistia and through the Judean Hills. Battle of Nebi Samwil. Capture and Defence of Jerusalem.

(*Plates* VI, VII, VIII, IX, X.—*Sketch Maps* II and III, El Mughar.)

The Plain of Philistia.—The ground now to be traversed by the army, except for sand dunes fringing the coast, may be compared to Salisbury Plain. The belt passable by all arms was 15 to 18 miles wide to the foothills of the Shepaleh.

The Plain of Philistia is open country—a few cactus hedges are met with near villages—otherwise, the serious obstacles are the large water-courses, all running east to west. (Wadis Hesi, Sukerier, Surer, etc.).

These *wadis* have steep banks, and are difficult for vehicles to cross. The soil is very hard when dry, but absorbs water greedily; and after rain quickly becomes a sticky morass, impassable for motors, and difficult to march over.

The "former" rains begin in November, and last only a few days. The "latter" rains, and the real winter, set in about mid-December. Torrents of rain fall for three days at a time, then follows a week of fine weather. Cold wind, frost at night. Snow in the hills.

Sir Edmund Allenby's force was using the Turk's metalled road and their light railway for supplies; but lorries were having some trouble, as the "former" rains had begun.

The Pursuit through Palestine.—The pursuit depended less on manœuvre than on supply. The fewer the troops to be maintained beyond railhead, the further they could go. The XXth Corps had for the moment shot its bolt. The transport columns working for it hitherto now had to carry on for the XXIst Corps. The 10th, 74th, and later the 60th Divisions were sent back into the Deir-el-Belah area to refit. The 54th Division was deprived of all its transport, and left in Gaza with a dump of rations to subsist on.

The Desert Mounted Corps, now three divisions again, supported by the 52nd and 75th Divisions, followed up the Turkish VIIIth Army.

On 9th November, at 0800 hours, G.H.Q. sent out the following

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order to Desert Mounted Corps at Huj, by wireless, and confirmed it by aeroplane.

"O.A.T.245. 9. AAA.

Press on by shortest route with all available forces to TINE-BEIT DURAS. AAA. 60th Division will remain at HUJ and revert to command of XXth Corps. AAA. XXIst Corps will get troops forward towards JULIS-MEJDEL in support, and form pivot of manœuvre for you as soon as they can. AAA. Meanwhile press enemy relentlessly.—G.H.Q."

The Desert Mounted Corps' objectives, on this order, were as follows:—

Australian Mounted Division, E. Tine-Kustine, inclusive, and to reconnoitre Junction Station;

Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, Kustine (exclusive) to Beit Duras, reconnoitre Esdud, and gain touch with XXIst Corps;

Yeomanry Mounted Division, in Corps Reserve, on the railway east of Faluje;

D.M.C. Report Centre, to Huleikat. (*Plate* VI.)

The Turks in front of General Mott withdrew to Hebron and Daheriyeh, while the 53rd Division concentrated about Beersheba. Indications of a projected Turkish counter-attack, from Hebron against our right, were received on 9th November; but the VIIth Turkish Army were known to be so disorganized, and to have lost so much transport, that Sir Edmund Allenby disregarded this threat, except that the Imperial Camel Corps were moved up to Tel-el-Nejile in support of the Yeomanry Division. Khamsin weather prevailed for the next two days.

On 11th November, the Yeomanry Mounted Division was diverted from the foothills of the Shepaleh to Mejdel. All three mounted divisions were in action on 11th and 12th November; they advanced some 20 miles and took Esdud and Nahr Sukerier, an important place for landing sea-borne supplies.

The Battle for Junction Station (*Plate* VII).—On 13th November, the Turks were standing to face the British on a lightly-entrenched front of 20 miles, from Beit Jibrin to El Kubeibe. Their right was five miles in front of the Ludd-Junction Station railway; their left was in the foothills.

The position was taken by the Australian and New Zealand, and the Yeomanry, Mounted Divisions, which turned the right flank of the Turks, and the 52nd and the 75th Divisions, which stormed the centre and seized the Jerusalem railway.

El Mughar. (*Sketch Maps* II and III).—A remarkable cavalry action took place during this battle. The 6th Mounted Brigade were co-operating on the left flank of the 52nd Division, when that forma-

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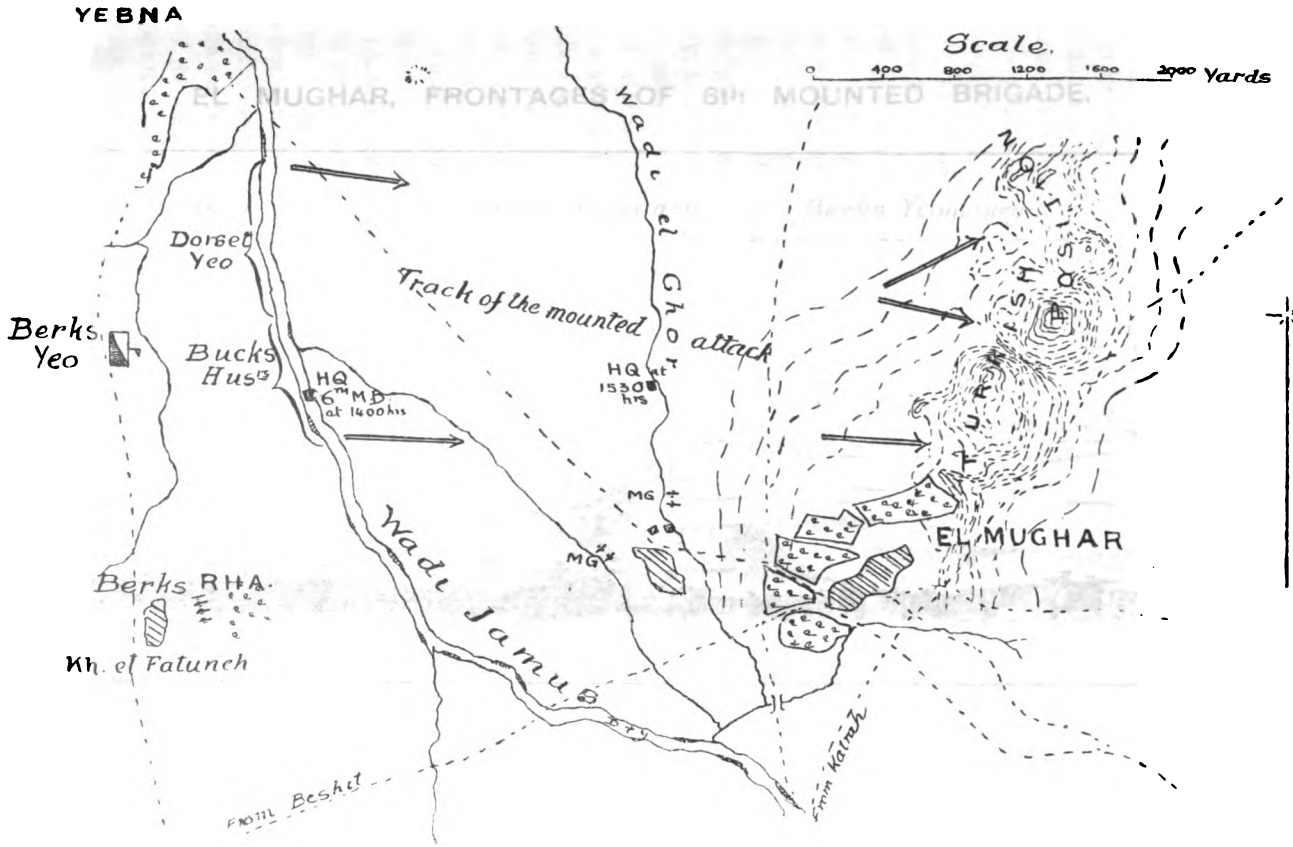
EL MUGHAR.



SKETCH II.

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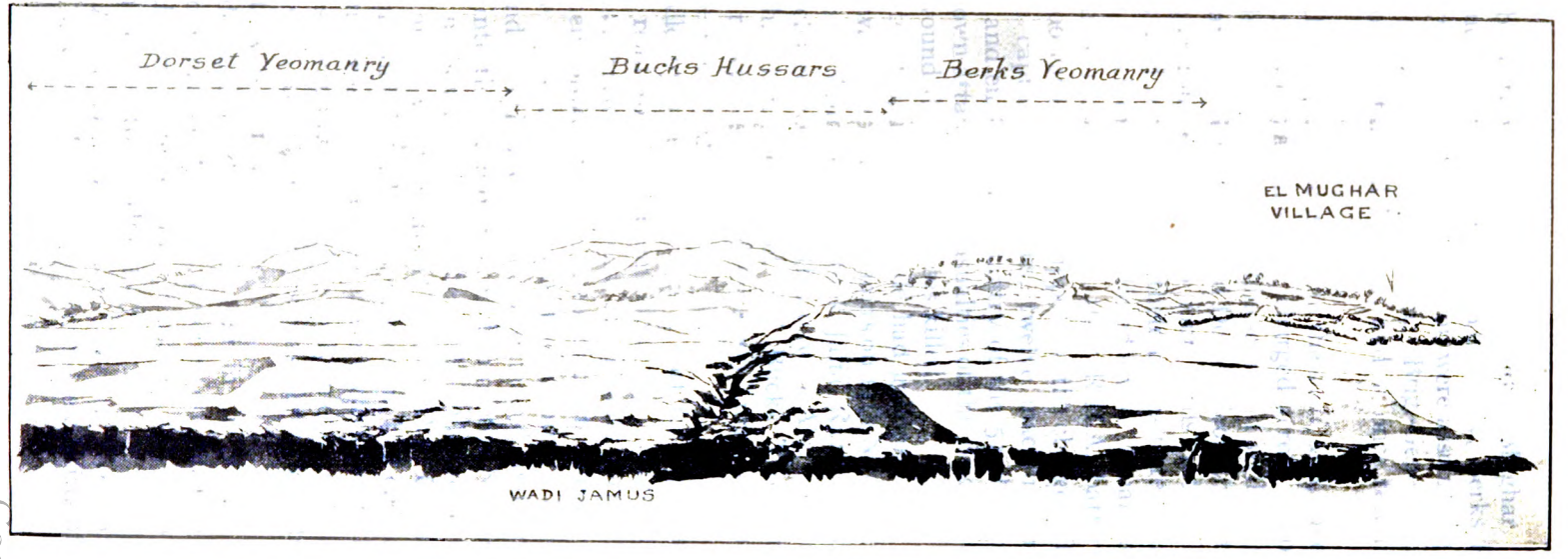
EL MUGHAR, FRONTAGES OF 6th MOUNTED BRIGADE.



SKETCH III.

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tion was checked by a strong Turkish position at El Mughar. About 1230 hours, the Bucks, Berks and Dorset Yeomanry, Berks R.H.A. battery and the 17th Machine-gun Squadron were assembling in the Wadi Jamus, a deep cleft in the plain. Brig.-General Godwin received instructions to take El Mughar, and at once reconnoitred the approaches.

At 1500 hours, the Brigade emerged from the *wadi*, and, covered by the R.H.A. and its own machine-guns, charged across 3,000 yards of open ground, through a zone of machine-gun and artillery fire, on to the Turkish infantry. The Bucks and Dorset Yeomanry attacked in columns of squadrons extended to four yards' interval. The Dorset Yeomanry had furthest to go, their horses were exhausted, and one squadron which dismounted suffered severe casualties. The Berkshire Yeomanry mopped up, and their R.H.A. battery fired 200 rounds at 3,200 yards' range in support of the charge. The 6th Mounted Brigade captured two guns, twelve machine-guns, and 1,100 prisoners; and enabled the infantry of the 52nd Division to push home their own attack. The casualties of the Brigade were 16 men killed, 113 wounded, and 265 horses killed.

The 8th Mounted Brigade meanwhile had galloped into Yebna. Junction Station was occupied at 1700 hours on 14th November; and, next day, the Desert Mounted Corps took Jaffa, Ramleh and Ludd. Another gallant charge occurred on this day at Abu Shusheh, just south of Ramleh, when the Dorset and Bucks Yeomanry rode against a strong rocky position held by 4,000 Turks, of whom 400 were killed in the encounter.

Sir Edmund Allenby had now secured a port for supplies, and a metalled lateral road to bring them along by. Meanwhile, the 54th Division was hurrying up the coast to rejoin its Corps.

The Turks then broke up into two distinct masses, widely separated by the physical formation of the country. The VIIIth Army (XXth and XXIInd Corps, four damaged and one fresh division) retired into the Plain of Sharon behind the Nahr-Auja—a real river. This mass was based on the Afule-Tulkeram railway.

The remnants of the VIIth Army (IIIrd and XVth Corps), of six shattered divisions, and the 3rd Cavalry Division, had only a *cul-de-sac* railway from Jerusalem, and really were based on railhead at Nablus, 50 miles away by road. The only means of cross-communications between these two masses was through Nablus and Tulkeram, about 75 miles round by road.

The Commander-in-Chief decided to contain the VIIIth Turkish Army, to wheel our forces to the right, pivoting on Junction Station, attack the VIIth Army and occupy Jerusalem, but he wished to avoid fighting in or close to the Holy City.

The First Advance on Jerusalem.—Battle of Nebi Samwil.—(*Plate* VIII).—The west side of the Judean ridge consists of a series

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of spurs, running east and west, separated from one another by narrow precipitous valleys. On the intended line of the British advance was only one real road, the Jaffa-Jerusalem-Jericho railway.

This ancient road traversed, east of Latron, a narrow defile for four miles. It then zigzagged over the mountains in a succession of hairpin corners, and it had been effectively damaged by the enemy. The other so-called roads were mere goat tracks up the hillsides, or along the boulder-strewn *wadi* beds, and quite impassable in their existing state for wheeled transport.

The plan of attack was to move the Yeomanry Mounted Division (Major-General Barrow), supported by infantry of 52nd Division, through the Judean Hills by the tracks three to five miles north of the main highway, and break out on to the main Jerusalem-Nablus highroad and so to cut off the Turks in Jerusalem. The 75th Division, in the centre, was to seize the Bab-el-Wad defile, and the 10th Australian Light Horse advanced by the defile further south, through which the railway went up.

The Yeomanry Division moved off on 17th November through Shilta, near Ludd, and reached Beit-ur-el-Tahta on 18th November. The 52nd Division passed Beit Likia on the 19th, and with great efforts, double-horsed and man-handled, took three sections of artillery along with them.

The Yeomanry were held up in front and tried to work round the right of the Turks, who were now being reinforced by the fresh troops of the Yilderim Army, diverted from Mesopotamia. On the main road, on 20th November, the 75th Division was strongly opposed by entrenched troops about Saris. The weather broke, and this helped our troops, who, at 1700 hours, stormed the heights of Kuret-el-Enab, in the fog and mist, and cleared the summit of the pass, 3,000 ft. up. There they bivouacked, in their summer clothing, through a pouring night.

Next day, the 75th Division captured the commanding spur of Nebi Samwil, the furthest point to which Richard Cœur de Lion advanced. This strong eminence overlooks Jerusalem, and is only three miles from the Nablus road. (After this achievement, the 75th Division set up the " Key " as their Divisional sign.) The 52nd Division made progress, but the Yeomanry were in most difficult ground. Although heavily opposed, they got nearly to Beitunia and Ram Allah, two miles from the Nablus road. But their mountain artillery was outranged, and the mounted brigades were obliged to relinquish their gains.

On 22nd November, the Turks tried three times, in vain, to retake Nebi Samwil ; and, during the next three days, the 52nd and 75th Divisions unsuccessfully tried to advance. The British line was only four or five miles from Jerusalem, which was in sight ; but cold and casualties had, for the moment, enabled the Turks to stem the

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advance. The offensive was suspended until communications could be improved, fresh troops brought up, and supplies and ammunition assured.

The feature to observe in this phase is that the enemy again was given no breathing time. He had been hurried up the plain, hit at hard when he turned to stand; and now he was hustled through the mountains past the ground where, if he had been able to organize his defences, he might have held up his pursuers indefinitely. These narrow passes from the plains have seldom been forced, and have proved fatal to many invaders. But, in one uninterrupted rush, the whole British force had advanced 50 to 60 miles, had secured Jaffa, had divided the Turkish Armies, and was at the gates of Jerusalem.

The Second Advance and Occupation of Jerusalem (*Plate* IX).—On 22nd November, the headquarters, XXth Corps, were set up at Junction Station, and the 10th, 60th and 74th Divisions, fresh and refitted, were all hot-foot across Philistia. The 53rd Division was preparing to move along the Hebron road. The plan for the next move was that the XXth Corps should advance on Jerusalem from the south-west and west.

During the interval of preparation, especially road-making, the Turks delivered several counter-attacks.

On the left of the British, on November 25th, the VIIIth Turkish Army pressed back the thin screen across the Auja, and re-established their line overlooking Jaffa.

On 26th and 27th November, the 52nd and 75th Divisions were being moved over to the coastal plain. Next day the XXth Corps took over the Jerusalem front and the XXIst Corps the Ludd-Jaffa front.

The Yeomanry, in the right centre, continued to be heavily pressed, until they were relieved by the 74th Division, and went into reserve south of Jaffa.

The pressure of the new attack from the south-west was now developed. On 1st December, General Mott with the 53rd Division began to move on Hebron, and by the 6th December he was four miles south of Bethlehem and in touch with the 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment in Wadi Surar.

The six weak divisions of Turks were now holding a line covering Bethlehem from the south, then turning to the north across the railway, and along the formidable ridge overlooking the Upper Wadi Surar, then east of Nebi Samwil, and thence bearing north-west towards Nalin.

The British line was: 53rd Division opposite Bethlehem, 60th Division south of the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, 74th Division by Nebi Samwil, 10th Division at Beit Sira; and the Australian Mounted Division filling the space between the XXth and XXIst Corps.

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As a preliminary to the main attack from the west, the 179th Brigade, 60th Division (Brig.-General Edwards), crossed the Wadi Surar on the night 7th-8th December and seized the heights south of Ain Karim.

The main attack began at dawn, in wet weather, and was supported by both heavy and mountain artillery. On the east, the 60th and 74th Divisions captured the heights east of Wadi Surar by 0700 hours. The 60th had afterwards a very difficult task, as the high road was enfiladed from the north by formidable entrenchments. The 74th Division took Beit Iksa, but also were strongly opposed. The 53rd passed Beit Jala by Bethlehem. At nightfall, the attack was suspended, and the British line was consolidated. The Turks now were fighting on a line parallel to and close to their line of supply and retreat, the Nablus road.

On Sunday morning, 9th December, the Worcester Yeomanry crossed the front of the 53rd Division, and got astride the Jerusalem-Jericho road, closing that exit to the Turks. By 0830 hours, the 53rd Division were within two-and-a-half miles of Jerusalem; and at that moment the Mayor with a flag of truce was meeting the advanced troops of the 60th Division to arrange for the surrender of the city.

During the night, the Turks had evacuated the city, and retired about three miles north-east, astride of and along the Nablus road. It was intended to remove the civilian population, but they could not do this in the time.

The 60th and 74th Divisions were now wheeled to the north, pivoted on Nebi Samwil; and on 9th December they cleared the Nablus road north of Tel-el-Ful and Shafat, while the 53rd Division occupied the Mount of Olives and all high ground east of it from which the Turks could observe Jerusalem.

Sir Edmund Allenby made his official entry into Jerusalem on 11th December.

For the next ten days, the XXth Corps were busy consolidating positions, improving communications, and accumulating supplies. The coastal area again became the centre of interest.

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SKETCH IV.

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CHAPTER VIII.

The Crossing of the Auja River.

The presence of the Turks on the high ground near the coast, north of the Auja, and at Bald Hill and Mulebbis south of it, and further east, rendered Jaffa insecure for shipping and threatened the one lateral road, Jaffa-Ramleh-Latron-Jerusalem. The XXIst Corps were directed to drive the Turks north and to occupy the line Rantieh-el Jelil. (See *Sketch Map* IV.)

The river Auja was from 40 to 60 yards wide, averaged 10 ft. deep, with few fords, it ran at about three miles per hour, and was subject to heavy floods in the winter rains. In winter, the river was fordable only at the bar formed just where it enters the sea, and there the depth was about 3 ft. 6 in. The Turks had an entrenched post to cover this ford, and also kept it under frequent bursts of machine-gun fire at night. The Jaffa-Tulkeram road crossed the Auja at Hadrah by a stone bridge, which also was a mill dam; but the Turks had blown this in. East of Stone Bridge, the ground on the south and left bank was marshy. Generally, the banks of the river were low and muddy, but small groves and belts of trees between Stone Bridge and Jerisheh afforded some cover on both banks. The Nahr Burdieh joined the Auja just below Sheikh Muannis. A belt of sand dunes ran up the coast and, from Tel-el-Rekkit, low cliffs extended northwards.

Inland, north of the Auja, the country consisted of a downland of sandy hills, with a little cultivation west of Sheikh Muannis. South of the river, there were low grassy hills, thin scrub and some orange groves. Besides Mulebbis, on the left bank, the Turks had a strong position at Sheikh Muannis situated on a ridge, about half a mile north of the river and one-and-a-half miles inland.

The forcing of a passage was entrusted to the 52nd Lowland Division (Major-General John Hill). The river front was carefully examined. A particularly bold reconnaissance was made by two officers who swam out to sea, landed on the Turkish side, came back through their lines undetected, and plumbed the ford as they came.

General Hill proposed to effect the passage by night, and by surprise, without any particular artillery support until after the crossings had been secured. After that, his plan was to proceed covered by a barrage worked to a time-table. But, in order to lull the enemy into a false security, he was to be put under a drill, as regards artillery-fire, and to be given a regular dose of night

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bombardment each evening; so that, when the real attack came, there would be no abnormal artillery action to alarm him.

Broadly, the plan was to take across a small covering force, if possible undetected; then to pass the three brigades over at three points (the Ford, below Muannis, and at Stone Bridge), and also to demonstrate further east in order to confuse the Turks. The Navy were to cover the left flank, and harass the Turks near the coast.

Subsequently, the Turks were to be pressed back until beyond range of Jaffa; and the 54th Division on the right also were to move northwards.

The covering troops were to cross first, at point X, on rafts made up from 2,300-gallon canvas tanks. Each raft carried 16 men. Then light bridges were to be put across, on piers of similar rafts, to take infantry and pack animals. Subsequently, pontoon and barrel-pier bridges were to be built, and the Stone Bridge repaired. Timber was obtained by pulling down houses and sheds. A pontoon bridge was sent up from the Suez Canal. The rafts were put together under the trees in the German Colony of Sarona. The infantry practised embarking and disembarking in a large irrigation tank at night, and also rehearsed cutting through cactus hedges in the dark.

The operation was fixed to begin on the evening of December 20th, at 2000 hours.

The first troops to cross were to be the 1/7th Highland Light Infantry battalion of 157th Brigade, and its task was to swing left and take the Turkish trenches guarding the Ford at the river mouth. It was to be followed by one battalion 156th Brigade, which was to move simultaneously on B (Slag Heap Farm), while a company was told off to bomb the stone wall at C. It was hoped that the enemy would be confused, and would wait to clear up the situation before launching a counter-attack, which would then be too late. Two other battalions of 156th Brigade were to take Muannis, and roll up the trenches at D, respectively. The rest of 157th Brigade were to cross at the Ford and move on Tel-el-Rekkit. The 155th Brigade were to demonstrate at G, and, later in the night, cross at H and secure Hadrah and the Stone Bridge.

The 19th and 20th December were very wet days. The Auja rose alarmingly, the valley became water-logged, and the approaches to the crossing place (at X) were so soft that at the last moment 200 yards of corduroy road had to be laid to enable the rafts to be taken to the river. There was a young quarter-moon, the night was uncomfortably light, very cold, and sounds travelled amazingly.

The intercommunication was very complete, and cables from Divisional Headquarters to brigades and to the artillery were all duplicated.

The operations commenced to time, and in six minutes four rafts

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were afloat at X; half an hour later, half the covering party were across undetected, and the leading pontoon raft was at the water's edge by 2035 hours.

By 2200 hours the light bridges were three-quarters completed, the second battalion was crossing, but the bridging parties were experiencing difficulty with the current and soft banks, and in getting the last bay into place. All times were now put back half an hour. By 2230 hours, two battalions were across, and still all was quiet.

At 2300 hours the first bridge was across and in use. By midnight the whole of 156th Brigade was across, and by dawn they had secured their objectives and were well dug in.

The assault started at 0025 hours on 21st December. The 7th Highland Light Infantry completely surprised the Turks and took the trenches for 1,000 yards north of the Ford.

The 1/4th Royal Scots took Slag Heap Farm.

The 1/7th Royal Scots took Sheikh Muannis by 0300 hours.

The 8th Scottish Rifles cleared the ground at D, south of Muannis.

The 1st Scottish Rifles (brigade reserve) put the long wall, C, into a state of defence and had formed a dump of 50,000 rounds, S.A.A.

Meanwhile, at 50 minutes after midnight, the remainder of 157th Brigade began to ford the river—the 1/6th Highland Light Infantry leading.

The Ford had not been marked by pickets, owing to the river's swollen state, but the Commanding Officer found it, and the battalion crossed, the men in fours with arms linked, while the Royal Engineers put up the pickets as they went. There were 30 casualties from shell-fire. All went according to plan. By 0200 hours the 157th Brigade was across, and they had secured all objectives by 0548 hours and were dug in.

On the right, the 155th Brigade began its demonstration about 2315 hours, and its covering party at H got across unobserved by 2325 hours. This ground was so boggy that they could not launch their bridge piers, and the troops had to ferry over in rafts, and so lost time; and at 0235 hours, they were 30 minutes late in the programme. But, by 0340 hours two battalions were across; two hours later the 5th Royal Scots Fusiliers had taken Hadrah; and after stubborn fighting Stone Bridge was in our hands at 0540 hours.

At 0600 hours, two batteries were ordered to cross the Ford, to support 157th Brigade, and the Navy were informed that all objectives had been taken. It seems that the Turks had expected an attack for some days, but when the artillery-fire proved to be the normal evening shelling, they regarded the attack as merely local demonstrations. They considered the only feasible crossing to be at Stone Bridge, and that elsewhere was impossible in the existing state of the river.

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In daylight, the 52nd Division crossed over its divisional artillery —only one howitzer stuck in the Ford—and got ready for another bound forward.

The weather cleared. Three light bridges were finished. A heavy pontoon bridge, and a barrel pier bridge (piers floated down the Nahr Burdieh) were commenced. Stone Bridge could not yet be repaired. The Turks kept it constantly under shell-fire.

On 22nd December, the N.Z.M.R. Brigade was crossed over. The 157th Brigade took Jelil, and then occupied the high ground at Arsuf. The mounted troops captured Tel-el-Nuryieh.

That evening, the 54th Division captured Bald Hill, and, during the next day, the line of the XXIst Corps was advanced so as to give ten miles clear between Jaffa and our lateral road, and the Turks.

The Turkish Attempt to retake Jerusalem, 27th to 30th December. (*Plate* X).—The winter had now set in, and the line held by the British was suitable everywhere, except just north of Jerusalem, to which the enemy was still too close. Preparations to push him back to the line Beitin-Nalin, some 12 miles north, were in hand; but, on 24th December, news from a reliable source came in to the XXth Corps that the Turks intended to attack on Christmas Day, advancing on both sides of the Nablus-Jerusalem road.

All formations were warned, and the arrangements already planned for the advance were to be put in force as soon as the Turks became sufficiently involved.

The Turkish attack was late, but, on December 25th, the 60th Division captured a prisoner of 1st Division, just arrived at Bireh, who confirmed the news of the impending attack by the 19th, 24th, and 53rd Divisions in front, and the rest of the Turkish XXth Corps operating from the Jericho side.

Early on December 27th, the Turks heavily attacked the 53rd and 60th Divisions, and particularly about Tel-el-Fut. They delivered eight assaults with picked troops. Meanwhile, the 74th and 10th Divisions were directed to advance on the left, towards Beitunia and Ram Allah. This prompt counter-attack disconcerted the Turks, who were being elbowed off the Nablus road. The Turkish attacks were fruitless; their troops were spent and the XXth Corps (Lieut.-General Sir Philip Chetwode) on 28th December ordered a general advance northwards.

The 53rd, 60th, 74th and 10th Divisions, breaking down the Turks' resistance, gained ground on both sides of the Nablus road, and their final position, on 30th December, was Beitin-Balau-Deir-el-Khuddis.

The Turkish attempt to re-enter Jerusalem suffered crushing defeat, notwithstanding the fresh and specially-trained troops brought up for it They were caught exhausted, and the net result

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of their offensive was that the British advanced on a 12-mile front for a depth of six miles on the right, and three miles on their left.

Sir Edmund Allenby's forces now held an admirable position to cover Jerusalem and Jaffa, and the cross-connecting road and railway, while the winter rains forbade any further advance.

In nine weeks of open warfare, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force had advanced its front some 60 miles, and had fought over sandy desert, open plains, marsh, and mountains, and with a climate varying from a Khamsin to a snowstorm.

Observations.—The operations of this campaign, from Beersheba to Jerusalem, brought out almost every principle of war.

All the great strategical methods were practised :—

Surprise and envelopment—at Beersheba.

Penetration—at Hareira, followed by persistent pursuit.

Separation—after the battle for Junction Station.

Interception, and *Forcing the enemy to form front to a flank*—as on the Nablus road.

Refusing to conform to the enemy's movements—as when von Kressenstein tried to entangle us in the Hebron foothills.

All the familiar maxims, easy to quote, but so difficult to apply, were illustrated in these nine weeks.

Mystify and mislead the enemy.—Effectively done at Beersheba.

Concentrate superior forces at the decisive point.—Carried out at Hareira.

Compel the enemy to expend reserves.—As after Umbrella Hill.

Economize force, and create fresh reserves at every opportunity.—In using only XXIst Corps for pursuit, and re-fitting the XXth Corps to be ready to relieve XXIst when tired.

Hit hard, hit often ; when checked at one point, strike elsewhere.—Exemplified at Gaza, and in the Jerusalem operations, 21st-24th November.

The campaign also illustrates remarkably the influence of geography, physical features, climate and communications, on the course of operations. And these operations also serve to illustrate the great influence which supply and transport have upon a campaign.

And the practical problems worked out were as varied as the strategy : attacks from trenches, desert marches, river passages, forcing defiles, crossing mountains—all were dealt with. Again, at Beersheba, it was demonstrated how unsafe it is to leave out an isolated detachment within reach of a mobile enemy. While the means of warfare employed covered every imaginable device, nothing seemed missing, ancient or modern, from a camel convoy to a caterpillar, an artillery barrage, or a forced march.

This campaign also brings out the influence of the personality of the Commander. Sir Edmund Allenby was a careful, foreseeing,

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and forceful leader. When he had decided on a course of action, he carried it through. In any contest of will, it was his way that prevailed, as his opponents discovered. In vain Kress von Kressenstein tried at Khuweilfeh to divert him from his main purpose: and later, von Falkenhayn's attempt to stay the retreat by threatening the right from Beit Jibrin was ignored by the British Commander-in-Chief.

Attention has already been directed to the way in which the mounted troops were developed and schooled in Sinai (p. 20); and since then they had achieved a more advanced stage of progress, in really fluid warfare, in Philistia and in the Judean Hills. This campaign afforded opportunity for the extensive and continuous employment of cavalry in every variety of operation. But it must not be imagined that they alone won the war. The operations of the mounted troops depended on and were supported by the other arms. The campaign teems with instances of such mutual interdependence. In fact, it is probable that these operations will become a classic, for they constitute a nearly ideal instance of the proper use of all the arms in combination, and of cavalry in particular.

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CHAPTER IX.

Preparations for an Offensive in the Spring of 1918.

General Situation in January, 1918.—By New Year of 1918, Russia had made a separate peace. The American Army was not yet fully trained, and Germany was preparing a great effort to effect a decision on the Western Front, before the United States could bring their forces into the war. The Turks were reoccupying the Caucasus, but losing ground in Mesopotamia. The Salonika front was stable. Egypt and the Sudan were quiet. (See *Plates* XI and XII.)

In Palestine, the British line ran from five miles east of Jerusalem northwards to Beitin, then west to Nalin, and thence north-west to the sea-coast near Arsuf, ten miles north of Jaffa. The XXth Corps were on the right, XXIst Corps on the left, and Desert Mounted Corps mostly in rest about Mejdel, Esdud, Yebna. *Plate* XI shows the approximate positions of the British line towards the end of January, in February, and on 21st March. It will be observed how little force the Turks had then beyond the Jordan.

It might, perhaps, be asked why did not Sir Edmund Allenby go straight on in January, 1918, when he had in front of him a defeated army. One reason was the presence of the Turks in the lower Jordan valley, and in Moab, which will be dealt with further on. But the main factor was supply. The British force had outrun its communications. On 1st January, their railway was 15 miles south of Ludd. The Turks had very effectively destroyed the big bridges on the mountain section of the Jaffa-Jerusalem railway: and the problem was how to feed the troops, and a civilian population in Jerusalem itself of some 80,000 souls, by a single road over difficult passes. The season was quite unsuitable for open warfare; and, in fact, it was impracticable to go on until the communications had been put on a sound footing.

Moreover, the further forward the British went now, the more easy they made the task of the Turks, who would get nearer to their broad-gauge railhead at Rayak, near Damascus, and to their sources of supply. So the Commander-in-Chief's policy was to consolidate, and then to advance step by step, so as to be in a position to take the offensive later, and destroy the Turkish Armies altogether.

Geographical Features of Central and Northern Palestine, and across the Jordan.—The theatre of operations contained some very marked natural features. East of the Dead Sea and Jordan depression rose the mountains of Moab, from 3,000 to 4,500 ft. high. The

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approaches to this plateau are very difficult for troops or transport; but these fertile highlands furnished corn to Palestine and Syria, and were traversed by the Hedjaz railway from Damascus, through Deraa and Maan to Medina. North-west of these highlands, and about 100 miles from Jerusalem, is the Hauran or Jebel Druse, also famous for its wheat and barley. All this country is occupied by Arabs, generally owning little allegiance to the Turks. Jebel Ajlun, bordering the Jordan, was particularly notorious for its unruly tribes.

The approaches to the plateau of Moab all go up affluents of the Jordan—the Wadi Nimrin, the Zerka, Wadi el Arab, and the Yarmuk valley are the chief entries. The only practicable road for vehicles from Jericho leads through Es Salt to Amman on the Hedjaz railway, 50 miles from Jerusalem.

The river Jordan, hemmed in between Moab and the hills of Judea and Samaria, falls very rapidly from Lake Tiberias (685 ft.) to the Dead Sea (1,292 ft.). The river flows extremely fast, and rises rapidly after heavy rains and floods the banks. The stream is about 120 ft. across in the lower valley. Much of the bank is covered with thicket, passable only at the regular tracks. The chief tributaries on the west are the Wadis Kelt, Auja, Fara from Nablus, and Nahr Jalud through Beisan. The most important crossing-places are the Henu and Hajlah fords, near the Dead Sea, the Ghoranieh bridge, the Jisr ed Damie at the end of the Wadi Fara, and the Jisr Mejamie near the Yarmuk (Jisr=bridge). A rough road traverses the valley northwards, on the west bank, from Jericho to Beisan, skirting the foothills. The climate of the Jordan valley is oppressive at all times, and in summer the heat is often intense, and malaria is prevalent.

West of the Jordan, the main range of the Judean hills embraces Mount Ephraim and Mount Gerizim and, north of Nablus, extends into the mountains of Samaria, terminating in Mount Gilboa. This range is from 2,000 to 3,000 ft. high. The only road for vehicles is the ancient highway to Damascus, through Nablus, Nazareth and Tiberias; and this was only partially metalled. Water sufficient for local needs is found throughout the range. The valleys of Central Palestine are cultivated, and the hillsides often are terraced for olives and vines.

A branch of this main Judean range cuts across Palestine at an angle to it of 120 degrees and ends in Mount Carmel. This branch is from 1,200 to 1,500 ft. high—very rough country, and forms the southern boundary of the great plain of Esdraelon. This plain is in three parts—the valley of Jezreel, with Beisan, on the east; the plain of Megiddo, opposite Nazareth, in the centre; and the plain of Acre, under Mount Carmel, on the west.

The plain of Esdraelon is very fertile, and well watered by the rivers Jalud and Kishon, but it is notoriously unhealthy and malarial in summer.

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On the west, along the coast, lies the plain of Sharon, famous as a battle ground in the Crusades, but marshy and malarial. This plain is traversed by a partly-metalled road from Jaffa to Tulkeram and Nablus, with a branch road from Tulkeram to Haifa and Acre.

The same sequence of river, mountain and plain continues on the north of the plain of Esdraelon.

The river Jordan, which rises in the southern slopes of Mount Hermon, flows through Lake Hule (+ 7 ft.) into the Lake of Tiberias.

The Galilean Mountains, west of the River Jordan, are from 3,000 to 4,000 ft. high and merge into the Lebanon range. The Bay of Acre is a fine anchorage; and, north of it, there is a narrow strip of coastal plain which ends abruptly at Point Nakura, a steep spur of the lower Lebanon. Fair roads exist from Haifa and Acre across the hills to Nazareth, and up the coast to Tyre and Sidon.

Preparations for the Offensive in Spring, 1918. (*Plate* XI.)—The enemy's line of communication, the Hedjaz railway, lay only 50 miles east of Jerusalem; and it was an obviously attractive operation to break across on to it. But no such undertaking, east of the Jordan, could be carried through, until the lower Jordan valley and the principal crossings over that river were in British hands. Moreover, it was necessary, in order to secure their right flank, that they should control the crossings, and acquire sufficient space to the north of Jericho to ensure that Jericho, as an advanced base, would be immune from attack.

The Commander-in-Chief decided first to drive back the Turks on his right, take Jericho, and occupy the lower Jordan valley, and, later on, to extend his front northwards.

By securing the crossings over the lower Jordan he would:—

(*a*) Prevent the Turks from raiding west of the Dead Sea;
(*b*) Gain control of the Dead Sea, and probably secure grain for Jerusalem;
(*c*) Obtain a good starting point for incursions into Moab; and to co-operate with Sherif Feisal's army working up the Hedjaz railway.

The limits for the first advance were fixed at the Dead Sea, and west bank of the Jordan up to the entry of the Wadi el Auja, eight miles north of Jericho.

The XXth Turkish Corps, on the right of the British, had about 5,000 rifles available; but the difficulties of the ground offered greater obstacles than the probable opposition of the enemy. A series of ridges provided strong defensive positions for the enemy, and the precipitous *wadis* running eastwards rendered cross-communication and cohesion between attacking troops very difficult.

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Early in February, the 60th Division took over the line east of Jerusalem, and the 53rd Division on its left faced north-east and north. The general plan was for the 60th Division to advance directly as far as the cliffs overlooking Jericho ; while the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division was to cover their right, enter the Jordan valley near Nebi Musa, and cut off the Turks retreating from Jericho.

On 19th February, the 60th and 53rd Divisions made the first step. El Muntar, eight miles south-east of Jerusalem, was taken and, behind this feature, the mounted troops assembled to operate against the enemy's left. The 53rd Division gained ground commanding the El Taiybe-Jericho track.

During the night 19th-20th February, the 60th Division deployed for the attack of Talaat ed Dumm, and against Jebel Ekteif on the right—about five miles from Jericho. The left, on the Wadis Fara and Kelt, advanced about four miles. The mounted troops met strong opposition south of Nebi Musa, but found a way round, and by dusk one brigade was in the plain of Jericho.

In the night, the Turks withdrew, and next morning, 21st February, the Australian troops entered Jericho and patrols reconnoitred to the Auja, and to Ghoranieh Bridge. The Turks had covered the latter with a bridgehead, and this was not engaged. The 60th Division took up a line on the high ground through Talaat ed Dumm. One mounted regiment was left to patrol the Jordan valley, and the remainder of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division went back into rest camps.

Although the right flank was now secure, the Commander-in-Chief did not consider the base thus obtained sufficiently broad to permit of operations being carried out east of the Jordan against the Hedjaz railway. It was essential first to cross the Wadi Auja and occupy the high ground on the north bank about Mussalabeh, which covered the approaches to the Jordan valley by the Beisan-Jericho road. Secondly, by advancing further northward, on both sides of the Jerusalem-Nablus road, it was necessary to deny to the enemy the use of all tracks leading to the lower Jordan valley. When this had been done, the enemy would be able to transfer troops from west to east of the Jordan only after making a big detour to the north.

Accordingly, the XXth Corps were directed to take Abu Tellul, north of the Auja in the Jordan valley, and further west to carry their line to Kefr Malik, the high ground by Sinjil, the ridge north-west of the Wadi el Jib, and so to Nebi Saleh. The XXIst Corps were to advance to the line of old Crusaders' castles—Mejdel Yaba and Ras el Ain—and to the northern heights of the Wadi Ballut, which joined into the Wadi el Jib. The two corps would thus move forward their 26-mile front for a maximum depth of seven miles

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The ground in the hills was rough and steep, and movements necessarily had to be slow.

The operations began on 8th March, and both corps made progress. The XXth Corps got to the line Nejme-El Taiybe-Sinai-Bir es Zeit, and the XXIst Corps took Abud, a lofty village.

The 60th Division crossed the Auja in the dark, and had stiff fighting to gain Abu Tellul, and to get astride the Jericho-Beisan road.

The 53rd Division took Tel-el-Asur, a very prominent point, while the 74th and 10th Divisions reached the Wadi Nimr and Wadi el Jib. On 11th March, the heights on the far side of these valleys were occupied. The XXIst Corps also completed its task, the 75th and 54th Divisions taking the line of the Wadi Ballut, and Ras el Ain, on 12th March, after severe fighting.

The experience we gained in these operations showed that a rapid advance in the hills was impossible unless unopposed. This was one of the reasons why the Commander-in-Chief chose the coastal area for his main operations in September.

The Raid on Amman.—The situation was now ripe for a raid on the Hedjaz railway. If the British could get on to that railway, the Turks would have to call up troops from the south to help to drive them off; and the forces opposed to Sherif Feisal would be effectively weakened. The particular objectives for a raid were a tunnel and a viaduct near Amman Station; or, failing these, the raiding troops were to do as much general damage as possible to the line elsewhere.

Amman is 30 miles east-by-north of Jericho. It is approached from Ghoranieh Bridge by a poorly-metalled and precipitous road up the Wadi Nimrin to Es Salt, a town of 15,000 inhabitants. Es Salt is a road centre for tracks from the Jordan fords at Um es Shert, and Jisr ed Damie, and from the north. The road from Es Salt to Amman was also difficult and in bad repair.

The force allotted to the raid consisted of the 60th Division, the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, Imperial Camel Brigade, a mountain artillery brigade, light armoured-car motor brigade, and a heavy battery—all placed under G.O.C. 60th Division (Major-General Shea).

The plan was for the 60th Division to force the crossings over the Jordan. The Mounted Division and Camel Brigade, after crossing the Jordan, were to move direct on Amman, demolishing the railway through Naaur and Ain es Sir. After demolishing the railway about Amman, the whole force was to withdraw to bridgeheads on the Jordan. The Turks by this time no longer held any ground on the west bank of the Jordan below the Auja.

The crossing of the Jordan was entrusted to the 18th Brigade (Brig.-Gen. C. F. Watson), supported by the divisional artillery. It was to force its way over at both Hajlah and Ghoranieh, and cover

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the construction of four or five bridges. Feints were to be made simultaneously at other suitable crossing-places, and a small party in motor-boats were to land on the north shore of the Dead Sea. The rest of the infantry were to cross by pontoon bridges at Ghoranieh, and the mounted troops at Hajlah. The river was high and unfordable, and the stream ran at about eight miles an hour.

The operations commenced early on 21st March, in heavy rain. The flooded Jordan continued to rise, and the attempts at Ghoranieh to cross it in the darkness failed. But at Hajlah, swimmers and rafts got across undetected, and so all efforts were concentrated on Hajlah.

The first bridge was ready by 0810 hours, three battalions were over by noon, and a second bridge was open by 1330 hours. The thicket was so dense that the troops could not extend until next day, when the Auckland Mounted Rifles had got across, and worked round behind Ghoranieh and cleared away the Turks there. By 2200 hours on 23rd March, five bridges were in use, but nearly three days had been spent merely in crossing the swollen river.

Next day the infantry drove the Turks off the Shunet Nimrin position; and, using two roads, and with a mounted flank guard, occupied Es Salt that night. But the mounted troops, marching directly on Amman in heavy rain, met great difficulties. All wheels had to be sent back. At 0500 hours on 26th March, they reached Es Sir, with animals so exhausted that only small demolition parties could proceed to the railway.

By that evening (26th March), the railway south of Amman was being blown up, but the mounted troops were held up in front of Amman, and the Turkish garrison was getting reinforcements. The infantry came up, and Amman was again attacked on 28th and on the night 28th-29th March. But the available artillery was insufficient, and the attacks only penetrated a part of the village.

Meanwhile, the Turks were getting stronger, and the Jordan bridges were causing anxiety, as the river had risen nine feet more. Es Salt was threatened from the north. On 30th March, at 1730 hours, the troops were ordered back. By the evening of 2nd April, General Shea's force was safely back west of the Jordan, but he kept a bridgehead on the left bank.

This twelve-day raid did not achieve all its objectives, but it had important results. It drew in reinforcements on Amman. The Turks round there increased from 4,000 before the raid to 8,000 just after. It greatly relieved Feisal's situation, and enabled him to become more active in raiding, and in besieging Maan.

The raid alarmed the Turks. They became apprehensive lest a still greater movement from the Jordan should seize Deraa, envelop their left, and cut off their armies in Palestine and Arabia.

The enemy soon realized how inconvenient the British bridgehead on the Jordan would be to them, and on 11th April they attacked

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simultaneously the Ghoranieh bridgehead and the British front on the Jericho-Beisan road. They got no success and left 500 dead. The enemy then withdrew to the Shunet Nimrin position and proceeded to settle down there.

The Raid on Es Salt.—The Turks at Shunet Nimrin were an isolated force; and, at the end of April, an opportunity presented itself to cut them off in conjunction with the local Arabs who had offered to assist. The Desert Mounted Corps and part of the 60th Division were employed. On the morning of 30th April, the infantry attacked the Shunet Nimrin position in front, while the Australian Mounted Division by a detour north captured Es Salt by 1800 hours. In this move the troops covered 13 miles in 70 minutes.

A mounted brigade was left to watch the flank and stayed astride the Jisr ed Damie road, with patrols to the Zerka and a detachment at Um es Shert.

At 0730 hours on 1st May, this flank brigade was attacked by the 3rd Turkish Cavalry Division, and part of 24th Division, which had crossed during the night at and below Jisr ed Damie. The Turks penetrated between the main body of the brigade and their detachment at Um es Shert. The brigade fell back to the Wadi el Abiad, and lost nine guns in the bad ground. This left the troops in Es Salt only the Um es Shert track for supply or retreat.

Next day, a combined attack from the north and south on the Turks at Shunet Nimrin had to be called off, owing to the difficulties of ground and the menace of two battalions, Turkish artillery, and cavalry on the north of Es Salt. Besides, the expected Arab support did not materialize, and Shunet Nimrin continued to get supplies. So, again, the evacuation of Es Salt was ordered. A difficult flank march was skilfully executed; and the raiding force was safely across the Jordan by the evening of 4th May, bringing nearly 1,000 prisoners.

This raid still more convinced the Turks of the danger to Deraa. The idea prevailed that these raids were primarily reconnaissances with a view to main operations later into Moab.

Observations.—The operations in Palestine of the first five months of 1917 afford remarkable examples of the employment of mounted troops in mountainous country, supported by infantry.

In the taking of Jericho, the cavalry were working on the flank of the infantry, and succeeded in getting round behind the enemy, who, when his position was turned, wisely withdrew from the Jericho plain.

The first raid to Amman illustrates how weather may upset operations, protracting them so that the advantage of surprise is lost. That raid furnishes another instance of forcing a river in the face of an enemy and of following up an advantage—by developing the bridges at Hajlah—rather than lose men in forcibly overcoming the

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resistance met with at Ghoranieh. This raid also showed how it is possible to reorganize transport, even in the midst of operations. The mounted troops had to extemporize pack-transport, and abandon their wheels, and yet were able to reach their objective as planned.

In the second raid, to Es Salt, the mounted troops again demonstrated the power of the "long arm," to reach out, snatch an advantage and rapidly return.

Looked at from the enemy side, both these raids illustrate the danger to which weak detachments—as were the Turks at Amman, Es Salt, and Shunet Nimrin—are exposed, when the opponent is mobile and enterprising.

And then these raids show how an enemy may be misled strategically, and encouraged to expect developments from the wrong direction.

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CHAPTER X.

The Arab Army.

After the Sherif of Mecca's revolt in June, 1916, the Turks sent reinforcements by rail to Medina, and seriously intended to crush the Arabs, and retake Mecca.

Although the desert Arabs of the Hedjaz were fired with enthusiasm for the cause of freedom, and wished to win it for their country, and their less fortunate kin, they were temperamentally unfitted to oppose trained troops in normal warfare. They were volatile, and handicapped by tribal traditions and jealousies. They came and went as they pleased, and generally would not serve outside their tribal area. Their blood feuds complicated their concentrations and actions.

When the Turks easily brushed aside the tribesmen, posted on apparently impregnable positions, it was urged that a more stable and highly-trained and organized force was necessary to resist them, and the idea of creating a Hedjaz regular army arose. The nucleus for such a force existed in the peasants from villages near Medina, who had been driven out by the Turks, and from others near Mecca. At the same time Captain T. E. Lawrence, who was then with Sherif Feisal, saw that the Hedjaz would best be defended, not directly—by blocking the Mecca road—but by getting on the flank and nerves of the Turks. He prevailed upon Feisal to adopt this strategy and, with the assistance of the Royal Navy, to convey his men along the coast to Wejh, about 250 miles north of where he then was. The Arabs entered Wejh on 22nd January, 1917, and found themselves 150 miles behind Medina. (*Plate* I.)

Immediately the Turks became alarmed. In a short time 11,000 men were put to garrison posts along that line, and all danger to Mecca ceased.

At Wejh, the training of a regular Arab force seriously began. Some British and Egyptian officers and N.C.O.s were provided as instructors, and Feisal's Arabs were augmented by about 1,000 ex-prisoners—Arabs of the Turkish Army—for the most part infantry already trained to the rifle. These were now trained principally to special work, machine and Lewis gunners, field gunners, and sappers drilled to demolitions.

During this stage, Lawrence evolved his theory of a warfare adapted to the Arab character, and for ousting the Turks from the Arabian countries. The underlying principle was that the valuable

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desert Arab should not be wasted in close fighting. His enthusiasm, intelligence and mobility, and the fluidity and dispersion of his many tribes should be utilized to harass the Turks far and wide, and oblige them to scatter their strength and waste their material. The more Turks drawn into Arabia, where they could effect nothing, the less Turks elsewhere in the active armies. The Turks in Medina and along the railway were positively beneficial.

Lawrence conceived the idea of attaching to the Arab cause all the tribes up through Edom, Moab and Syria, until there should be set up " a ladder of tribes," up and down which the leaders and their small regular force might move. And each tribe in turn should engage in harassing enterprises against the enemy :—

For the Arabs—propaganda and plunder ;

For the Turks—perpetual raids and loss.

The capture of Akaba.—The next step for Feisal's force was to occupy Akaba. The orthodox and obvious approach would seem to be to move by sea, and to land, covered by the Navy, and work up to the plateau of Edom. But, the track from Akaba to the plateau rises nearly 4,000 ft. and for many miles is at the bottom of a winding gorge only 100 yards wide, and the defile is worse than the Khyber Pass. It was defended by a series of fortified posts, garrisoned by four battalions, with artillery. The Hedjaz railway is 70 miles from Akaba, and 45 miles of the road lie through these defiles.

Lawrence opposed the idea of disembarking on the Akaba beach, and urged that Akaba ought to be taken from the interior. He was told to try his method, and set out in April with a bodyguard of 17 Arabs. He rode 700 miles up country, through Jauf and Azrak, nearly to Damascus, and visited the chiefs *en route*. Lawrence found a tribe of the Howeitat willing to undertake the capture of Akaba, and after adjusting various tribal differences and blood feuds, he came down with 700 men and camped on the edge of the Jafar depression.

Maan was strongly garrisoned, but Fuweila, the post at the head of the defile, was held by a battalion of *Gendarmerie*. Sheikh Wad Abu Tai arranged for the post to be rushed at night, and the garrison were cut up. The defences of the remainder of the posts down the defile all faced seawards. The troops depended on a weekly convoy for food ; their supplies were cut off, and they all surrendered. Akaba was occupied on 6th July ; and Feisal and the Wejh force then moved on there by sea. At this moment Sir Edmund Allenby arrived in Egypt. He welcomed the presence of the Arabs on his flank, and further assisted the development of the Arab Army, which now proceeded to invest Maan.

After the fall of Jerusalem, the task set to the Arabs was to close the gap by which the Turks might move round the south end of the Dead Sea and worry the British flank at Beersheba or Hebron.

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Also, they were to stop the Turkish grain traffic along the Dead Sea. This they did by capturing the southern port and half the grain fleet—one of the few occasions on which a fleet has been captured by mounted troops.

The recruiting and training of the Arab Army continued all through the summer of 1918. By August, the regulars amounted to about 8,000, with 52 guns (of 17 varieties) and 150 machine-guns. Besides, depôts of arms were formed in the Leja, north-east of Deraa, in charge of the Salut tribe, ready to equip a horde of irregulars.

Up to August, 1918, the only transport, other than the tribal camels in the vicinity, were 700 baggage camels for the Akaba Convoy. But in August, when the Imperial Camel Corps were broken up, 2,000 riding camels were given to Feisal. These were the foundation on which his flying column was built up; and it numbered about 1,000 men in all, distributed as follows:—

450 camel-riding infantry;
100 machine-gunners;
150 Algerian artillery;
4 65-mm. mountain guns;
300 bodyguards, engineers, etc.;
a small party of British R.A.F. and R.A.M C. personnel.

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CHAPTER XI.

Effect of the German Offensive in France, March-April, 1918.

When the XXIst Corps had moved to the Wadi Ballut on 12th March, preparations proceeded for a further advance in the coastal sector about the middle of April. But the success of the German offensive in France against the Vth Army, and on the Lys, rendered it necessary to draw on Palestine for reinforcements. The provision of man-power was at an acute stage. It was decided that the Egyptian Expeditionary Force must send as many British troops as possible to France, and must expect no more British reinforcements. Only Indian troops and reinforcements could be furnished to fill the gaps. Hitherto, the divisions had been all British, with the 20th and 49th Indian brigades non-divisional. The Palestine front now must adopt the Indian pattern of division, and entirely reorganize its formations.

The first instalment to go was two complete divisions, out of the seven in Palestine. The 52nd Division embarked in the first week and 74th Division in the second week of April. The Yeomanry regiments were withdrawn from the Desert Mounted Corps and replaced by Indian Cavalry. The Imperial Camel Corps was disbanded. One division only, the 54th, was retained on a British establishment. In all others, nine British battalions were withdrawn for service in France, or to be used as drafts. Altogether, 48 British battalions and six Yeomanry regiments and a quantity of artillery were lost to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

This depletion temporarily crippled Sir Edmund Allenby's forces, and forbade an offensive on a large scale until the force had been reorganized, and had trained its new personnel.

The reconstruction was effected thus :—

Mesopotamia sent the 3rd and 7th Indian Divisions ; and India provided men for 24 battalions, many of whom had very little training. Six Indian battalions were raised locally by withdrawing a company from each of the 24 Indian battalions already in the force.

The cavalry, perhaps, were the best off, as France had previously released the 5th Indian Cavalry Division and, with the reinforcements from India, these experienced cavalry regiments went to form the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions, which replaced the Yeomanry Divisions and Imperial Camel Corps.

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From May to early September, intensive training was in progress in all divisions. The new Indian battalions and other units were devoid of specialists; Lewis and machine-gunners, signallers, drivers, etc., had to be provided for three-quarters of the units, and most of these were trained in the field; and, in view of the great difficulties of language and the lack of experienced N.C.O.s, it certainly was a remarkable feat thus entirely to alter the organization and composition of an army, carry out its training in face of the enemy, and within five months fit it for a victorious campaign.

Local Offensive Operations on the Main Front.—Although the larger operation, planned for April, had to be cancelled, the XXIst Corps was able to proceed with a limited offensive to improve its line, especially in the hills on the right. Kefr Ain, Berukin, and Rafat, all across the Wadi Ballut, were captured between 9th and 11th April. This enabled the British to use the Wadi Ballut for lateral communications and to benefit fully from the water it contained.

Again, on 8th June, the XXIst Corps made an advance, but on its left, to secure ground north of Richard I. Castle at Arsuf. This gain entirely prevented the enemy from overlooking the British position on the left and gave good observation of the enemy's lines on this flank. The concealment of the ground here was particularly important in view of the use to which it was put in the autumn. On both Corps fronts, the Turks were kept busy by frequent minor enterprises, raids and improvements of the British line.

In these operations the newly-raised troops gained experience and confidence. The most noteworthy was on August 12th, when the 29th Brigade raided the El Burj-Gurabeh ridge, north-west of Sinjil. Here, one British and two Indian battalions surprised the Turks on a frontage of 2½ miles. The advance had to traverse 2,000 yards of rocky ground and climb 900 ft. to attack an enemy behind sangars. The Turks were attacked on both flanks and completely surprised, and the raiders returned with 239 prisoners and 13 machine-guns.

The Turkish-German Attack on Abu Tellul.—After the Es Salt raid, the Jordan valley front was taken over by the Desert Mounted Corps, now of four divisions. Normally, one division was down in the valley and the remainder were echeloned back towards Jerusalem on higher ground. The retention of a strong formation in the valley, in spite of the severity of the summer there, accentuated the impression on the Turkish command that the aim of the British was to break out on that flank towards Deraa.

Under German pressure, a serious effort was made on 12th July to overrun the line and deprive the British of essential ground.

On the night of 11th-12th July, the enemy concentrated troops on both banks of the Jordan. A German "Pasha" battalion,

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and some 3,000 Turks, assembled near Abu Tellul, and another group near Henu Ford. Abu Tellul was attacked and captured at 0330 hours, so that the advanced line of the Desert Mounted Corps at Mussalabeh was isolated; but, although surrounded, the posts held out. Within an hour, the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade counter-attacked, and by 0500 hours Abu Tellul was retaken; and the enemy, driven back against our isolated posts, lost heavily.

In this operation the Turkish infantry badly let down their German allies, and left them to execute the dangerous work unsupported. The 1st Australian Light Horse captured 276 Germans and 62 Turks.

The enemy on the left bank fared no better. The Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade was crossed over to forestall the Turks moving on Henu. By skilful use of ground they got within charging distance, and made the most of their opportunity; 90 Turks were speared and 91 captured.

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CHAPTER XII.

Initial Preparations for the Autumn Offensive.

The strategical plan for the destruction of the Turkish Army was drafted in May, and was then communicated to Corps Commanders. The necessity of training the newly-raised Indian battalions had made it desirable to postpone the offensive operations on a large scale for several months.

The opening of the wet season in November rendered it necessary to complete the campaign by the end of October; so that the middle of September was decided on for the opening moves. (See *Plate* XII.)

The preparations, besides training, dealt chiefly with improvement of communications, accumulation of supplies, and lines of local defence. First of all, the railway from Ludd to Jerusalem was converted from 3 ft. 6 in. to standard gauge—a very difficult task in the mountain section. The Turkish railway from Junction Station to Beersheba was connected to the Rafa-Beersheba branch line at Irgeig, and similarly widened. This gave Sir Edmund Allenby a double track from Rafa to Ludd; and the double line already existed from Rafa to Kantara. At Kantara, a swing railway bridge was built over the Suez Canal. Light railways multiplied immensely on both the XXth and XXIst Corps fronts. On the right, a line was built out from Jerusalem to Bireh. On the left, Jaffa was reconnected to Ludd, and a line taken up nearly to Abud. Another light railway from Jaffa ran north, across the Nahr Auja, nearly to Arsuf. Perhaps the enemy had been misled previously by the light railways on the British left flank at Gaza, but he does not seem to have let their development round Jaffa lead him to suspect a main attack on that flank again.

Road-making was on a grand scale. The Jaffa-Jerusalem-Jericho road, and the Nablus road within our lines, were widened and improved out of all recognition. Four great spur roads were run out towards the front, two in the XXth Corps area, two in the XXIst; and lateral roads were built to cross-connect these. A semi-permanent bridge was built over the Jordan at Ghoranieh, and many masonry bridges over *wadis*.

The port of Jaffa was improved, and the landing of supplies there much accelerated. Ludd became an immense supply and ordnance area, with Rafa as an advanced base. But Jerusalem and Talaat ed Dumm also developed very large dumps, and the lorry traffic

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down the Jericho road was very heavy. Water supplies all along the front were improved, and extensive pipe-lines and pumps laid down to aid concentrations of troops. Much wiring of the line was put in hand to enable portions to be held thinly, when troops should be drawn out to concentrate elsewhere.

The anti-aircraft defence was highly organized, and elaborate arrangements were provided for notifying by wireless the approach of hostile aircraft, with the result that the observation of our lines was rendered extremely dangerous to the enemy; and, towards the end of the summer, his aeroplanes were practically driven out.

Considerations affecting the strategy of the Autumn Offensive.—At the beginning of September, the Turkish forces on the Palestine front were in three Army Groups:—

IVth Army.—Headquarters, Amman; 2,000 sabres, 6,000 rifles, 74 guns, facing us east of the Jordan; with a further 6,000 rifles and 30 guns south along the Hedjaz railway at Maan;

VIIth Army.—Headquarters, Nablus; 800 sabres, 7,000 rifles, 111 guns; on both sides of the Jerusalem-Nablus road, on a 20-mile front;

VIIIth Army.—Headquarters, Tulkeram; 1,200 sabres, 10,000 rifles, 157 guns, holding from Furkah to the sea;

General Reserve.—3,000 rifles, and 30 guns, dispersed between Tiberias and Haifa.

Total enemy fighting-strength, approximately:—

4,000 sabres, 32,000 rifles, 400 guns.

Ration-strength, south of the line Beirut-Damascus, about 104,000 men.

These forces were commanded by General Liman von Sanders, who had relieved von Falkenhayn in February, and who had already fought against British troops in the Dardanelles.

The British and Overseas Forces in Palestine at this time were:—

4 cavalry and mounted divisions;
7 infantry divisions; and besides,
A French contingent equivalent to a brigade group.

Their total fighting-strength was, approximately:—

12,000 sabres, 57,000 rifles, 540 guns;

a superiority of nearly two to one over the enemy. (See *Appendix* III. Orders of Battle.)

The Arab forces, under Sherif Feisal, were approximately 8,000 fighting men; a valuable adjunct on the flank of the British in an advance.

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Sir Edmund Allenby, in his dispatch of 31st October, 1918, wrote as follows:—

"I was anxious to gain touch with the Arab forces east of the Dead Sea, but the experience gained in the raids against Amman and Es Salt, in March and May, had proved that the communications of a force in the hills of Moab were liable to interruption as long as the enemy was able to transfer troops from the west to the east bank of the Jordan. This he was in a position to do, as he controlled the crossing at Jisr ed Damie. The defeat of the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies, west of the Jordan, would enable me to control the crossing. Moreover, the destruction of these armies, which appeared to be within the bounds of possibility, would leave the IVth Army isolated, if he continued to occupy the country south and west of Amman. I determined, therefore, to strike my blow west of the Jordan."

The whole of the Turkish forces west of the Jordan—except the small scattered reserve—was enclosed in a rectangle 45 miles in length, but only 12 miles in depth, whose northern edge was a line from Jisr ed Damie through Nablus and Tulkeram to the sea. (See *Plates* XI and XII.) All the enemy's communications ran northwards from the eastern half of this line, for 25 miles, to Afule or Beisan; and thence eastwards up the Yarmuk valley to Deraa Junction. El Afule, Beisan and Deraa were the vital points of the enemy's communications, to which his front was parallel. If these points could be seized, his retreat would be cut off. Deraa was beyond the reach of the British, but was accessible to the Arab forces moving wide over the desert.

El Afule, in the Plain of Megiddo, and Beisan in the valley of Jezreel, might be reached by our cavalry, if a gap could be made in the enemy's defensive line for them to pass through. It was essential that this gap should be made at the outset of the operations, so that the cavalry should reach the vital points before the enemy had time to man the passes of the mountains of Samaria, leading into the Plain of Esdraelon.

The operations of the XXth Corps, in the hills north of Jerusalem, had proved that an advance of five miles a day was the most to be expected in such mountainous country. A far more rapid and decisive advance than this was necessary, and the easy ground of the Plain of Sharon gave scope for this. Moreover, the approach by the coast would enable the cavalry to cross the mountains of Samaria at their narrowest point; and would facilitate the railway and road developments necessary for the maintenance of an advancing army.

Such were the reasons for which Sir Edmund Allenby decided to deliver his main attack in the Coastal Plain, rather than in the hill region north of Jerusalem.

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The Plan of Campaign.—Briefly, the plan of campaign was to transfer the bulk of the cavalry (to be three divisions) secretly to the coast; to transfer the 60th Division from the XXth to the XXIst Corps, and so, to concentrate an overwhelming superior force of infantry and guns against the right of the Turks. It was intended to begin with a short but intense bombardment, then to deliver the assault, create a gap at the coast, and immediately push the cavalry through to capture El Afule and Beisan. Simultaneously, the Arab Army was to attack the Hedjaz railway about Deraa.

The enemy held two lines of defence in the coastal plain of Sharon.

The first, 14,000 yards across and 3,000 yards deep, ran north-west from Bir Adas to the sea, a series of redoubts connected by continuous fire-trenches.

The second line, 3,000 yards further north, extended from Et Tireh to the Nahr Falik; and near the coast the ground was marshy and with few crossing places.

When the Desert Mounted Corps (less the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division) and the 60th Division had assembled behind the XXIst Corps, the British numbers on the front of the main attack were, approximately:—

9,000 cavalry;
35,000 rifles;
383 guns;

to act against

1,200 cavalry;
8,000 rifles;
130 guns.

Instructions to the Various Corps, etc.—Lieut.-General Sir Edward Bulfin, commanding XXIst Corps, had at his disposal the 3rd, 7th, 54th, 60th and 75th Divisions, the French contingent, 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade, two brigades mountain artillery and 18 batteries of heavy siege artillery. The instructions he received were:—

(*i*) To break through the enemy's defences between the railway and the sea;
(*ii*) To open a way for the cavalry;
(*iii*) To seize the foothills south-east of Jiljulieh, and then
(*iv*) To swing the XXIst Corps to the right, pivoting on the French Contingent and 54th Division, on the line Hableh-Tulkeram, and advance north-east so as to drive the enemy up the Messudie-Jenin road into the cavalry at El Afule.

The G.O.C., Desert Mounted Corps had the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions, and the Australian Mounted Division. Lieut.-General Sir Harry Chauvel was directed to advance along the coast

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immediately the infantry had secured the crossings over the Nahr Falik. On reaching the line Jelame-Hudeira, he was to turn north-east, cross the hills of Samaria, and enter the plain of Esdraelon at El Lejjun and Abu Shusheh.

The Desert Mounted Corps was to seize El Afule and Jenin, send a detachment to Nazareth, leave sufficient force at El Afule to cut off the retreat of the Turks there, and go on to Beisan, and also seize the Mejamie railway bridge over the Upper Jordan. (See also page 60.)

The XXth Corps, under Lieut.-General Sir Philip Chetwode, now contained only the 53rd and 10th Divisions, who were on the flanks of his position; the centre was now very thin. He was ordered to advance his right on the night preceding the main attack, so as to place the 53rd Division in a favourable position later to block the exits to the Lower Jordan valley.

Major-General Sir Edward Chaytor, with the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, Imperial Service Infantry Brigade, and four unbrigaded battalions (Chaytor's Force) was ordered to cover the British right flank and execute a series of demonstrations in the Lower Jordan valley, to induce the enemy to believe that an attack east of the Jordan, towards Amman or Magdeba, was beginning. The enemy's suspicions that such an attack was in preparation had already been strengthened by every possible means.

The functions of Sherif Feisal's Arab forces were twofold. First, they were to ensure that the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, in its advance, east or north, would be welcomed—not resisted—by the Arabs whose territories it would traverse.

Second, a flying column, consisting at the outset of about 1,000 Arab regular troops, was to assemble at Kasr-el-Azrak early in September. Thence, it was to cut the Hedjaz railway, and all the enemy telegraphs, effectively, south and east and north of Deraa, on a particular day—not sooner nor later, and keep them cut. Afterwards, gathering strength from the Arab tribes, and arming them from the previously-formed depôts in the Leja, the column was to cover the right of the British advance.

Kasr-el-Azrak was conveniently situated in the desert, 50 miles east of Amman. If the column were discovered, its presence there would serve also to convince the Turks that a concerted advance on Amman was in preparation.

The object of attacking round Deraa was to draw up there the small available Turkish reserves from Afule: and adherence to the exact date was important, so that the enemy should neither first get wind of the greater attack on the coast, nor have time to get back from Deraa to oppose the cavalry who were to break through into the Plain of Esdraelon.

The arrangements with Sherif Feisal were made in the simplest

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manner. No operation orders, no written instructions. Colonel T. E. Lawrence came over by aeroplane to General Headquarters and there received the personal directions of the Commander-in-Chief which, on return to Fuweila, he conveyed to Sherif Feisal.

The task of the Royal Air Force, prior to the main attack, was to prevent hostile aircraft from detecting the great concentration of troops in the XXIst Corps area. Very early in the morning of attack a Handley-Page aeroplane was to open the offensive by bombing El Afule; and a special bombing squadron was to attack all the other known telegraph centres behind the line, so as to break up the enemy's intercommunication system at the outset of operations.

The Royal Navy arranged to co-operate with two destroyers, who were to fire upon any enemy using the road along the coast.

Preparations for the Attack.—The chief difficulty to be overcome was to effect the concentration without disclosing what was afoot. The marches of the mounted troops from the Jordan were effected by night, while the infantry sent to replace them moved by day. Even a practised observer would have had difficulty in detecting the changes, as the Desert Mounted Corps had long had rest camps by the coast, and the roads contained troops moving both east and west.

The Desert Mounted Corps and 60th Division, when they arrived in the coastal area, were hidden in the orange groves, olive yards and vineyards, between Ludd, Ramleh, Jaffa, and Sarona. Great care was taken in the watering of horses, and in concealing the vehicles, and in using air patrols to prevent enemy observation of our lines.

Elaborate arrangements were made to mislead the enemy in the Jordan valley. The Headquarters of the Desert Mounted Corps at Talaat ed Dumm, in view from the hills in the enemy's lines, remained standing for a fortnight after the Corps staff had departed to the coast. It was lit up every night, and the wireless traffic to and from it continued with normal regularity, as though the Corps were in the valley.

The thinning of the line behind the XXth Corps was stiffened by dummy camps, complete with transport, horse-lines and isolated parties grazing (all wood and canvas camouflage).

G.H.Q. commandeered and closed the principal hotel in Jerusalem as an advanced report centre. The Staff to occupy it was nominated, rooms allotted, and telephone system fitted up a week before the attack opened. But no one ever occupied it then.

Special steps were taken to facilitate the rapid advance of the railway and the supply of the troops on the move. At Rantieh, within two miles of the enemy front line, a railway station and supply depôt was laid down by night, and camouflaged.

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The supply of water to troops, when they should arrive about Jiljulieh, was assured by arrangements to lay on a 4-in. pipe-line from the Nahr Auja for six miles on Zero Day.

The enemy knew an offensive was in preparation, he was led to expect it from the east; and, in spite of his captures from patrols during the concentration period, he remained in ignorance of the real direction of the attack.

An appreciation of the situation, exactly three weeks before the blow fell, issued to Constantinople by the German *Liaison* Officer with the Turkish VIIIth Army reads:—

> ". . . The English will carry out this autumn, like last year, a well-prepared attack, whose strategic objective would be primarily Deraa, and its political objective the occupation of Damascus. (See *Plate* XIII.) In any case, the English will try to tie down as great a force as possible in the coastal sector. . . . But they will probably confine themselves more or less to demonstrations—just as they did last year at Gaza. They will use most of their forces—attack troops and cavalry in this case—against the country nearest the Jordan, and . . . they will be able to take advantage of the help of their Arab allies."

As a preliminary step, on 16th September the Arab flying column, which had moved on to Umtaiye from Kasr-el-Azrak, attacked the Hedjaz railway, 16 miles south of Deraa, and destroyed a bridge Next day (Z—2) they carried out extensive demolitions north and west of Deraa. They moved to Tel Arar, destroyed a bridge, and broke every rail for ten kilometres northwards; then they entered Mezerib, on the Yarmuk valley branch, and wrecked the station. (See *Plate* XIII.)

On 18th September, the Arabs crossed again below Deraa, destroyed the Nasib bridge, and caught the construction train at work on their first day's damage. On the same day the Royal Flying Corps heavily bombed Deraa Station. All traffic to Palestine ceased in consequence.

These diversions were highly successful; the German battalion at Haifa was sent up to Deraa on 17th September, and enemy aircraft were diverted to search for and bomb the Arab Force.

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CHAPTER XIII.

The Main Attack. The Battle of Sharon.

The concentration was completed on 18th September. The main attack was ordered to commence at dawn on 19th September.

During the night 18th-19th September, in the XXth Corps area, the 53rd Division made its advance on the east of the Nablus road; and the Royal Air Force bombing squadron set out to attack Afule, Jenin, Nablus and Tulkeram, and particularly with the object of destroying the telegraphs at the headquarters of the lines of communication, and of the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies.

The objectives for the XXIst Corps were as follows:—

First Objective.—Three Bushes Hill (north of Rafat) to the Nahr Falik. (See *Plate* XI.)

The infantry were to advance under a barrage, put down at the moment they were to move out from their places of deployment.

The French contingent to advance north of the Wadi Ballut.

The 54th Division to take ground north and west of Mejdel Yaba.

The 3rd, 75th and 7th Divisions to overrun the Tabsor defences.

The 60th to reach the Nahr Falik and form a bridgehead there.

The 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade were under the orders of the G.O.C. 60th Division, but took post, to start with, behind the 7th Indian Division.

The 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions were placed behind the 75th and 60th Divisions respectively.

Immediately the first objective had been secured, the XXIst Corps had to wheel to the east, clear the Kalkilieh-Tulkeram road, seize the high ground east of the railway, and be ready to continue the advance on Jenin.

The cavalry were to set out on their great envelopment.

The French were to be the pivot for the wheel of the infantry.

The 54th Division had to move north-east into the hills by Hableh.

The 3rd Division was to pass Kalkilieh and face east.

The 75th and the 7th Divisions were first to secure the Et Tireh defences, and then the 7th was to come up on the left of the 3rd.

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The 60th Division, on the extreme left, with the 5th Light Horse Brigade, was to swing across the Plain of Sharon—half-right—occupy Tulkeram, and cut the railway east of that place.

At 0430 hours, the artillery barrage in the coastal plain opened with an intense bombardment, lasting for 15 minutes, while the infantry moved out from their positions of deployment.

The attack of the XXIst Corps was supremely successful and according to plan. The speed of the infantry exceeded all expectations. A few details of the attack of the 75th and 60th Divisions will be of interest.

The 75th Division put two brigades in front and attacked in two waves. The leading wave of each brigade consisted of two companies of each of the two attacking battalions in depth. The second wave comprised the remaining two companies of each battalion, also in depth. Leading platoons of the first wave were extended, the remainder followed in artillery formation. The distance between the first and second waves was two hundred yards, and 500 yards from the second wave to the support battalion.

The 75th Division had, besides its divisional artillery, the support of four batteries of Royal Horse Artillery, six heavy howitzers, an armoured-car battery, and a squadron. The barrage had lifts at fixed times. No reliance was placed on the artillery for wire-cutting.

The 232nd and 234th Brigades advanced rapidly at first, and overran their part of the Tabsor defences, but the 232nd Brigade was checked at 0815 hours south-east of Et Tireh. The man-handled machine-guns had been outpaced, but got up in time to co-operate in the capture of the Et Tireh works, which were taken by 1100 hours.

On the coast, the 60th Division advanced with the 180th Brigade Group leading. Its task was to cross the Nahr Falik, and form the bridgehead. Then, the 181st Brigade was to pass through 180th Brigade and, with the 179th Brigade, make Tulkeram in three more bounds of about five miles each.

The 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade were directed to keep away on the west, and come down on Tulkeram from the north.

The barrage had opened at 0430 hours. By 0500 hours, in the 60th Division front the first line was taken.

By 0530 hours, all the second line was occupied.

At 0530 hours, the 5th Cavalry Division were told they might send up two brigades along the beach, where they had a covered way to move by.

At 0700 hours, the bridgehead was established, and half an hour later the 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade were ordered forward.

No bridge was necessary for the cavalry to cross the Falik. The cavalry now was fairly launched.

By 1100 hours, the wheel of the XXIst Corps had taken effect; the broken VIIIth Turkish Army was streaming across the plain

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towards Tulkeram—where chaos ensued. Horse and foot, artillery and transport of the VIIIth Army were striving to escape east, along the road which becomes a defile towards Messudie. Upon these the bombers of the Royal Air Force descended and returned again and again.

The road to Nablus became hopelessly blocked; and in the afternoon, when the 5th Australian Light Horse got on to that road, four miles east of Tulkeram, and the 60th Division reached that town, great booty was secured.

The XXth Corps now got orders to advance that night (19th-20th September) on Nablus; a difficult task, as the VIIth Turkish Army was not disorganized, and was holding a strongly-entrenched series of ridges across the main Nablus road.

The attack of the 10th Division was, therefore, delivered from the left flank, over broken roadless country so as to avoid a frontal advance. The 10th Division took Furkhah, Selfit, and Kefr Haris, and advanced about seven miles. The 53rd Division moved forward about two miles.

On 20th September, the XXIst Corps continued to advance eastward and, by the evening, the 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade and 60th Division had seized Messudie Station and the Jenin road; and, with the 7th Division on their right, had completely turned the right flank of the VIIth Turkish Army, and shut off their exit to the Jenin road.

Next day, the 10th Division was just outside Nablus, having covered 24 miles of the roughest country within 24 hours, while the 53rd Division arrived six miles on the east of Nablus, after overcoming considerable opposition in the morning. The XXth Corps may be said to have secured Nablus on the 21st September. And this crowned the first phase of these operations.

Altogether there were five phases:—

(*a*) The first phase had been barely 36 hours. By 1700 hours on 20th September, the VIIIth Turkish Army had been overwhelmed; and the VIIth was in full retreat, through the hills of Samaria towards exits which were already held by the Desert Mounted Corps.

(*b*) In the second phase, of three days, the fruits of the first success were reaped. The infantry, pressing on the retreating enemy, drove him into the arms of the cavalry, with the result that the whole of the Turkish VIIth and VIIIth Armies were captured. Haifa, Acre, Tiberias, and the country south and west of the Sea of Galilee were occupied on 23rd September. On 22nd September, the IVth Turkish Army east of the Jordan began to retreat, and Maan was evacuated.

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(*c*) The third phase commenced with the pursuit of the IVth Turkish Army by Chaytor's Force and ended in the capture of Amman on 25th September, and the surrender of the intercepted garrison of Maan on 29th September.

(*d*) The fourth phase included the advance of the Desert Mounted Corps to Damascus (taken on the 1st October), the capture of the remnants of the IVth Turkish Army, and the advance of the XXIst Corps by the coast to Beirut by 8th October.

(*e*) The fifth phase was the advance through Syria to Homs and Tripoli, and the occupation of Aleppo on 26th October.

All these operations form one story which is continued in the next Chapter.

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CHAPTER XIV.

The Battle of Megiddo—Destruction of the Turkish Armies.

The narrative in the previous Chapter showed how the infantry opened the way for the cavalry into the Plain of Sharon, and outlined the five phases into which the operations became divided. It now remains to follow the progress of the rest of the first stage. (See *Plates* XII and XIII.)

The full text of the instructions issued to the G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps is given in *Appendix* IV. Three features in these orders require emphasis :—

(*i*) The cavalry were on no account to get drawn into local fighting at the outset.

(*ii*) If any enemy retreated on Haifa, only the minimum detachment might be made to cover the lines of communication of our cavalry, so that the greatest possible force should be brought on for the task in hand, *viz.*, to seize El Afule and Beisan.

(*iii*) The action of the cavalry was to be characterized by the greatest vigour and rapidity.

The Advance of the Cavalry.—Before daylight on 19th September, the Desert Mounted Corps had assembled behind the 7th (Meerut) and 60th Divisions.

The leading divisions moved out through the gap created by the infantry, at 0900 hours, by two routes, and by noon they were on the line Jelame-Huderia, 18 miles away. The 5th Cavalry Division thence proceeded north for about ten miles, and, crossing the ridge of hills, entered the Plain of Esdraelon at Abu Shusheh, and then directed the 13th Brigade to raid Nazareth, and the 14th Brigade to seize El Afule.

The 4th Cavalry Division turned north-east, entered the narrow Musmus Pass at 0100 hours, just in time to forestall its occupation by a Turkish battalion. The 2nd Lancers, moving from El Lejjun on El Afule, encountered this battalion, barring the road. One squadron, a machine-gun section, and L.A.M. Battery, held the enemy in front, while the remainder of the regiment made a detour, and charged down on the left of the Turks. They speared 46 Turks,

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took 470 prisoners, and six machine-guns, and their casualties were one man wounded and three horses killed.

The leading troops of the 4th Cavalry Division reached El Afule at 0800 hours, half an hour after it had been occupied by the 5th Cavalry Division.

After a rest of four hours, the 4th Cavalry Division marched over the Valley of Jezreel and reached Beisan at 1630 hours, having covered 85 miles in 34 hours. The 19th Lancers, however, went 12 miles further that evening, to seize the bridges over the Jordan at Mejamie.

The 13th Brigade of 5th Cavalry Division, meanwhile, at 0530 hours, had entered Nazareth, headquarters of the Yilderim Army Group. Street fighting ensued; 2,000 prisoners, including some of the Headquarters Staff, were taken, and the office and records were captured. General Liman von Sanders himself escaped to Damascus. The 13th Cavalry Brigade then came in to El Afule.

The Australian Mounted Division (two brigades only) followed behind the 4th Cavalry Division to El Afule, but at Lejjun it detached a brigade which occupied Jenin at 1730 hours, and there took 8,000 prisoners.

Thus, within 36 hours, while the infantry had broken, and was following up, the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies, the cavalry had closed all their main roads of escape.

So ended the first phase of this campaign.

Destruction of the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies.—On 21st September, all organized resistance was at an end; the retreat had become a rout.

The 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade entered Nablus from the west, and the 10th Division from the south. By nightfall, the right of the XXth Corps was on the Wadi Fara, and the XXIst Corps were in Samaria.

All roads leading north and east were thronged with fleeing troops and transport and were targets for persistent bombing by the Royal Air Force. Those who got through alive merely walked into the net spread by the Desert Mounted Corps. In the Wadi Fara, leading from Nablus to Jisr ed Damie, the retreating column some eight miles long was caught in a gorge, and bombed to destruction. The drivers deserted their vehicles, and the road became indescribably blocked for miles.

The 4th Cavalry Division now was moving down the Jordan, closing the crossings below Beisan. Early on 22nd September, Jisr ed Damie was taken by a detachment from Chaytor's Force, and all escape towards Amman was cut off.

On 23rd September, the 5th Cavalry Division captured Haifa, after some resistance, while its 13th Brigade re-occupied Nazareth, and then took Acre.

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Practically the whole of the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies, horse, foot and artillery were now rounded up; and it became a serious difficulty to water and feed the throngs of prisoners.

The Capture of Amman and Destruction of the IVth Turkish Army.—The destruction of the VIIth and VIIIth Armies, and the occupation of Jisr ed Damie, with the bridge intact, on the morning of 22nd September compromised the position of the IVth Turkish Army. That night it withdrew from the Jordan valley, and on 23rd September—four days after the blow fell on the coast—it was in full retreat on Es Salt and Amman, pursued by the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, and bombed by the Royal Air Force. On the same day, Maan was evacuated and Es Salt was taken on 23rd and Amman on 25th September. The enemy retreated north, harassed by the Arabs, and leaving 5,000 prisoners in the hands of Chaytor's force.

Chaytor's force was now ordered to remain at Amman to intercept the Turkish IInd Corps, in retreat from the south, and pursued by the Arabs. On 28th September, the Corps had arrived within ten miles of Amman, and next day it surrendered, thankful to escape the attentions of the Arabs surrounding it.

Sherif Feisal's column continued at Um Taiye until 26th September, when it moved to Sheikh Saad, north-west of Deraa. Large accessions of Arabs had joined, so that it now numbered over 12,000. The Arabs captured almost all the guns and transport of the IVth Turkish Army, on the march near Er Remte, and greatly harassed the retreating enemy; and on the 28th September they occupied Deraa.

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CHAPTER XV.

The Advance on Damascus.

The total defeat of the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies opened the way to Damascus. On 25th September, orders were issued to the Desert Mounted Corps to occupy the capital of Syria, and to intercept the retreat of the last of the IVth Turkish Army. (See *Plate* XIII.)

The headquarters of the Corps were then at Nazareth, the 4th Cavalry Division was about Beisan, the Australian Mounted Division on the Sea of Galilee, and 5th Cavalry Division at Haifa and Acre.

The Corps advanced in two columns. The 4th Cavalry Division crossed the Jordan, and met with considerable opposition in the very broken country about Irbid and Er Remte. The first day's march was 38 miles. The approach to Er Remte was blocked by Turkish infantry; and so the Dorset Yeomanry were left dismounted to hold them in front, while the Central India Horse and 2nd Lancers worked round the flank. Meanwhile, the Turks launched a counter attack on the Dorset Yeomanry. The latter withdrew rapidly behind the ridge they were holding, mounted and charged directly on to the advancing Turks. They killed twenty-five and dispersed the remainder. The Division joined up with the Arab force on 28th September about Mezerib and pressed up the Mezerib-Damascus road on the heels of the remnant of the IVth Turkish Army, with Sherif Feisal's force on its right, on the Deraa-Damascus road.

At the same time, the Australian Mounted Division, having assembled at Tiberias, marched on Damascus by the Kuneitra road, followed by the 4th Cavalry Division.

They met first with opposition at Jisr Benat Yakub. This ancient stone bridge was damaged, and the crossing was held by a German and Turkish rearguard sent down in lorries from Damascus. After some delay, on 27th September, the 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade forded the river lower down, outflanked the enemy and cleared the main road.

The divisions now had to climb out of the Jordan valley, 3,500 feet in 16 miles, to the foothills of Mount Hermon; and for the first five miles the road was most difficult—boggy in places—and metalled with stones which Mr. Massey has described as varying in size from a man's head to a camel's body.

The villages in this locality—Circassian colonies—were hostile

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towards the British, and there was a good deal of sniping. Further fighting ensued at Kuneitra, and at Sasa, 20 miles from Damascus.

The Desert Mounted Corps and the Arabs now bore down on Damascus on a broad front on three roads. At 1000 hours on 30th September, the 4th Cavalry Division and the Arab forces on their right, swollen to about 35,000 men, were near Kiswe; part of the 4th Cavalry Division were approaching Sahnayah, and the Australian Mounted Division were at Katana, checked by a strong rearguard.

About noon on 30th September, the rearguard at Katana was driven in, and the Australian Mounted Division worked round the west and north-west of the city. The 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade and French Cavalry seized the Barada defile of the Beirut road four miles out, and entrapped a great column of troops. Many Turks were slain, and 4,000 prisoners were taken. That evening the 5th Cavalry Division was in the southern suburb of Damascus. The 4th Cavalry Division bivouacked 15 miles south, having fought continuously and marched 140 miles in six days.

Meanwhile, Damascus was in turmoil. Turks and Germans were literally fighting for vehicles, and no enemy administration remained to arrange any formal surrender of the city.

In the early hours of 1st October, the 10th Australian Light Horse and the Shereefian Camel Corps both were in the centre of the city; and, in the afternoon, part of the Desert Corps marched through the streets in a scene of the wildest enthusiasm.

During the morning, the Aleppo road on the north was finally closed, and the Turks along it were pursued for seventeen miles by the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade, and about 1,500 Turks were captured. For the next three days, stragglers and fugitives kept coming in. Altogether about 20,000 prisoners were taken in and round Damascus.

Out of all the three Turkish armies which, 12 days before, had numbered a ration-strength of 104,000 men, some 17,000 men (of whom 4,000 only were effective rifles) dispersed north—a rabble without artillery, transport or supplies.

The Advance to the Line Rayak-Beirut.—The Commander-in-Chief determined further to exploit the success by advancing to the line Rayak-Beirut. Beirut was a good port and harbour, and the railway and road over the Lebanon to Damascus would provide a much shorter line of supply. Besides, the Hedjaz railway had been so effectively damaged that it would require several weeks to restore traffic on it for our use.

Accordingly, the XXIst Corps was ordered, on 29th September, to move by the coast on Beirut; and, on the 3rd October, the 7th (Meerut) Division set out from Haifa, and entered Beirut unopposed on 8th October. Meanwhile, on 6th October, the Desert Mounted Corps

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had occupied Rayak Junction without fighting, and captured immense depôts of stores at that place.

The Occupation of Northern Syria, Aleppo, and the Bagdad Railway.—Immediately Beirut had been entered, the Desert Mounted Corps and XXIst Corps were ordered to advance on Homs and Tripoli, respectively. The Australian Mounted Division was left at Damascus, pending relief by infantry. (See *Plate* I.)

The 7th (Meerut), followed later by the 54th Division, continued its march up the coast; the 5th Cavalry Division moved between the two Lebanon ranges, it met with no opposition, and reached Homs, 120 miles from Damascus, on 15th October.

The roadstead of Tripoli, and a fair road across to Homs, rendered possible the supply of the mounted troops north of the Lebanon. In fact, it was only the simultaneous advance along the coast that enabled the force to be fed. The moves inland had been so fast, and had gone so far, that the troops outstripped the work of repairing the railway and the roads behind them. The Hedjaz railway had been extensively damaged by the Arabs, and the standard-gauge railway north of Rayak was almost devoid of serviceable rolling-stock. Consequently, the bulk of the supplies had to go by motor-lorry, and the distances were immense, and much of the road atrocious.

Aleppo lay 120 miles north of Homs, and the enemy there was reported to number about 20,000, of whom about 8,000 were combatants demoralized. The Commander-in-Chief determined to press on The 5th Cavalry Division advanced from Homs on 20th October. The weak rearguards they encountered were dispersed by the advanced groups of armoured cars, until these were held up on 24th October, five miles south of Aleppo, by a strong line of resistance. The 15th (Imperial Service) Cavalry Brigade came up on the evening of 25th October; and that night a detachment from the Arab Army broke into Aleppo, and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.

Next morning, the 15th Brigade worked round the west of the city, and interposed itself on the Alexandretta-Katma road to prevent the Turks from re-entering Aleppo.

The 5th Cavalry Division occupied Muslimie Junction on the Bagdad railway on 26th October, but was too weak to proceed further to open up the way to Alexandretta, and the Australian Mounted Division from Damascus was ordered up in support; but before it arrived the Armistice with Turkey had been arranged, and on 1st November Sir Edmund Allenby's remarkable campaign officially terminated.

In twelve days, the enemy's armies had been routed and rounded up, and the front had been moved forward 160 miles. Four weeks later, the whole of Syria had been taken, the Bagdad

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railway had been cut, and touch was established with Mesopotamia. The front of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force was now 360 miles from its starting-point of six weeks earlier.

In this period the marches of the 5th Cavalry Division had totalled 500 miles, and it had expended 25 per cent. of its personnel, and 21 per cent. of its horses.

Comments.—The employment of cavalry in mass was the great feature of the operations conducted by Sir Edmund Allenby. At Beersheba, he first employed this arm on the open flank and rode right round the enemy. Twice, later on, he struck at distant objectives, Es Salt and Amman, and so impressed the Turks that they dreaded what he might do next, and kept their forces dispersed, and so caused their downfall. In the culminating operations, the Commander-in-Chief's plan was framed to enable him to use his cavalry mass so as to destroy the Turkish Army, instead of merely to complete a local success. And, having achieved his purpose, he used it to carry out—in spite of extraordinary difficulties—one of the most relentless pursuits in history.

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CHAPTER XVI.

Remarks of General Liman von Sanders.

General Liman von Sanders has recently published his reminiscences, entitled *Fünf Jahre Türkei*, in which he depicts the events of 1918 from his point of view, and his views are worth examining. He makes the most of the stupendous difficulty of his problem, and particularly of his deficiencies in troops and supplies. If we were to believe his figures, he had in his three armies of ten divisions only 13,000 rifles and 1,200 sabres, and six weak German battalions. He gives the VIIIth Turkish Army only 3,900 rifles for their eighteen-mile front.

These figures are less than half of those with which his opponents credited him; and the British captures (nearly 100,000 prisoners and 400 guns) tend to confirm their figures, rather than his.

General Liman von Sanders blames Enver for starving him in men, in order to invade the Caucasus in the summer of 1918, so that he was compelled always to act on the defensive, and he says he was so weak in transport that he could not move his troops to fresh positions.

Reviewing the actual position of the Turkish forces, when he took up the command in March, 1918, General Liman von Sanders' opinion is that the line adopted across the Plain of Sharon lacked natural strength. The only suitable line, he says, was the Carmel-Samaria range. But, to use that, the greater part of Palestine would have to be abandoned. This the higher command in Constantinople would not sanction. Besides, the loss of this territory would have given great impetus to the Arab movement.

He also objected to the retention of the Hedjaz railway (below Amman), but says Enver ordered this to be held.

General von Sanders' views on the course of the British operations confirm remarkably the correctness of the appreciations of their Commander-in-Chief. The loss of Jericho was a great worry to him. He wanted to reduce the fronts of his VIIth and VIIIth Armies, and explains that he could only have effected this, if he could have straightened the bulge the British had made north of the Wadi Auja.

This explains his employment of so many German troops to try to drive in the Desert Mounted Corps at Mussulabeh on 14th July, when, as he says, too, the Turks let the Germans down badly.

The first raid on Amman was considered to be a serious attempt to break through. The British surprise failed, but the German

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General tells us that the garrison of Amman on 30th March was on the point of surrender, and that he himself kept on urging the commander to hold out. So Amman affords yet another case of the last ounce turning the scale.

The second raid, on Es Salt, is admitted to have been a complete surprise. The flank march of the Australian Division is called "quite extraordinary"; and the track used by the 5th Mounted Brigade was unknown to the German Staff.

General von Sanders always had his eye on the Jordan valley. He noticed the presence of the British and the Overseas troops there in the hot weather, and comments bitterly on the order he received from Berlin to withdraw all German troops from the Jordan and place them in healthy stations. He replied that it was impossible to do so. He was obsessed with the conviction that the British Commander-in-Chief would try to cut across from the Jordan to Deraa, and refers to it again and again.

The raid of the 10th Division on 12th August is claimed as a victory for the Turks. Sir Philip Chetwode is credited with employing ten battalions in it. Actually, he used three. So this bears out that the General's figures must be taken with caution.

Coming to the preliminary events of September, three interesting facts are presented :—

(*i*) A great fire at Haidar Pasha Station in July deprived the Turkish armies of long-expected and sorely needed stores.

(*ii*) The Taurus tunnels were being converted to broad-gauge track, and this section of the Bagdad railway was closed during the last ten days of September—an inconvenient moment to choose.

(*iii*) The German Air Force was in a bad way. They were outclassed, and, when desperately short of machines, the replacements from Germany arrived seriously damaged; not once, but as a rule. This confirms the story in *Eastern Nights and Flights* of the passing British Officer of the Royal Air Force who remonstrated with a prisoner working-party in the Taurus for working too hard in transshipping enemy stores, and found that, while the quantities they shifted seemed highly satisfactory to the Turks, the damage they were systematically effecting was equally satisfactory to themselves.

On 17th September, a deserting havildar is said to have reported that a great attack in the coastal sector was to open on the 19th. As a result of this information, apparently, the 46th Turkish Division was moved into the Et Tireh defences. But on the same day the news came in of the wrecking of the railway all around Deraa. General Liman von Sanders says he concluded that "major opera-

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tions were beginning," and immediately ordered up the German battalion at Haifa to Deraa.

Thirty-six hours later, the major operations did begin, indeed. But General von Sanders' introduction to them was that his line of communication centres were bombed, and he was cut off from news or control of what was going on.

He reverts to the failure of his communications frequently. He says that not only were the various headquarters heavily bombed, but that, elsewhere, the Arabs broke down the permanent telegraph lines—a tribute to the efficiency of Colonel T. E. Lawrence's arrangements. Anyway, the German commander had only precarious and intermittent communication with the front, and scanty and inaccurate information.

About 0930 hours, he heard that some cavalry had penetrated by the coast and were going north. He considered that their objective was Haifa, and warned the Commandant there. The possibility of a total collapse on his right did not enter his head. He expected the VIIIth Turkish Army would fall back on successive positions, and display the usual stubbornness of the Turk on the defensive. During one of the moments of intermittent repair of the telephone, about 0930 hours, he ordered a counter-attack from Kalkilieh towards the coast, and was told this was already proceeding. Only, when the wire was again momentarily restored, about mid-day, did he first hear that the coastal front was lost, and the remnants of the VIIIth Army were falling back on Anebta. With the headquarters of the VIIIth Turkish Army he never had any communication at all.

General von Sanders then gave orders for Lejjun to be held, and sent a *Gendarmerie* regiment from Nazareth under a German officer to do it. The 2nd Lancers disposed of this force (page 84).

He was unable to draw on the VIIth Turkish Army for troops, because they were being attacked now. But, even in the afternoon, General von Sanders does not seem to have realized his desperate situation, and, lacking precise information, he hoped that his right was falling back systematically, fighting. He issued orders for the IVth Turkish Army to retire to the Zerka, the VIIth to Beisan, and remnants of the VIIIth to Jenin. Only some days later was the full extent of the rout known to the Yilderim Headquarters.

General von Sanders' own comment is that his front had been too dispersed and that behind it, for 200 kilometres, the country was devoid of troops, except Arabs and Labour Corps.

When Nazareth was raided on 20th September, it was not entirely surrounded. General Liman von Sanders reached Tiberias at 1530 hours, and there tried to organize resistance. His plan was to hold the line of the lakes, Hule and Tiberias, and the Yarmuk valley to Deraa, whither he went himself—by trolley, presumably—after ordering Yilderim Headquarters to re-open at Damascus. Semakh,

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which was the keystone of this position, was held by Germans, who put up a stout resistance when it was captured on 25th September.

It is interesting to note that the move of the Desert Mounted Corps across to Damascus was not what the Germans expected. According to General von Sanders, Sir Edmund Allenby's *rôle* should have been to stick to the coast, to land a force at Beirut, and to send mounted troops up the Litani valley direct to Rayak Junction. This looks very direct on the map, but the tracks were hopeless for a large force, whereas the Kuneitra road, bad though it was, proved passable for lorries.

The Rayak line, which the German General hoped to hold, was unsound. When the British had taken Damascus, they had a direct road to Homs behind him, and could cut his forces off. General von Sanders abandoned Rayak Junction on 2nd October, and retired to Aleppo. Then the Arab movement spread to Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, and the situation became hopeless in the north, too.

General von Sanders complains, with justice, that his government did not understand the situation and conditions in Palestine, and greatly overestimated the military capacity of Turkey. It seems to have been no fault of his that he was outnumbered and ill-supplied, but it is also indisputable that on the field of battle he was outgeneralled, misled, and outmanœuvred everywhere.

Conclusion.—The progress of the *Entente* Powers in the War is reflected in the campaigns of Egypt and Palestine. In 1914 and 1915, the British were on the defensive everywhere and the Turks had the initiative. During 1916, the tide began to turn. The defensive was abandoned, Sinai was retaken, and the initiative passed to the British, while the Turks got into difficulties. In 1917, the Turks were staggered by defeats entailing the loss of Mesopotamia and half of Palestine. And when the knock-out blow fell in September, 1918, their collapse was complete.

Turkey was misled politically and strategically. She was the cat's-paw for Germany, and stood to gain little, as Germany meant to have a lot. The Turks were handicapped from the outset. They began war-weary; their difficulties were immense, no sea-power, inadequate communications, insufficient military resources: Gallipoli had ruined their army. It was a prime strategical error to attack Egypt at all; but, having done so and brought trouble on themselves, they aggravated that error by neglecting the menace from Egypt on Palestine.

Even after the Turks had lost Jerusalem, they continued to commit errors. For example, when the Russian revolution relieved them from pressure in the Caucasus, instead of coming away from that front, they indulged in a race for Baku with the Germans, and even tried to invade Persia.

Again, they would not cut their loss at Medina and Maan, but

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played the part mapped out for them by Colonel Lawrence, of expending their men and resources to no advantage.

They did contemplate withdrawal from Medina, but perhaps gave it up because they feared their troops would all be cut up in traversing the hostile Arab country. They might have abandoned Maan, but probably feared that their hold on Deraa would then be imperilled; and the latter place was vital to them so long as they remained in Central Palestine.

Their worst mistake was, perhaps, to credit Sir Edmund Allenby with the intention of operating directly against Deraa, by taking Amman. Fear of this induced them towards the end to keep nearly a third of their total force east of the Jordan, and in a country almost devoid of roads. But, as already pointed out, they had been encouraged in every possible way to believe in his intention to make a big move across the Jordan. It might be argued, that Sir Edmund Allenby later on did feed and maintain his cavalry corps over 100 miles from railhead, in spite of the abominable roads. And so he did, but he was able to do so because he had first crushed the Turkish armies.

The great anxiety at our General Headquarters was lest the Turks, who knew the British intended to attack eventually, should fall back. No doubt, they would have been very promptly followed up, but such a course would have gained them some time. The British forces would have lost the advantage which their railways and roads, built close up to the front line, had given them, and also the surprise which was the essence of Sir Edmund Allenby's success would have been lacking.

The greatest feature of the operations which crushed the Turks was the achievement of the cavalry, and in this connection, the views of Field-Marshal Lord Allenby himself on *Cavalry in Future Wars** are of special interest:—

> "The truth is that cavalry can and will fit in its tactics to any country . . ." (and the Field-Marshal instances its use) "in . . . the deserts east and west of Egypt, the rocky hills of Judea, the plains of the Palestine coast, the deep valley of the river Jordan, and the mountains of Moab."

Then the Field-Marshal continues:—

> "Experience teaches that a mounted attack, exactly timed, is almost always successful, and is less costly than a fire fight."

* A Foreword for the *U.S. Cavalry Journal*, January, 1921.

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APPENDIX I.

EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

FIGHTING STRENGTH—WEEK ENDING 20TH OCTOBER, 1917*.

	Officers.	O.R.
I. *Desert Mounted Corps.*		
Anzac Mounted Division	212	4981
Australian Mounted Division	202	4929
Yeomanry Mounted Division	197	4739
7th Mounted Brigade	54	1118
Imperial Camel Corps Brigade	80	2168
Total	745	17935
II. XX*th Corps.*		
10th Division	399	9252
53rd Division	359	11855
60th Division	346	11683
74th Division	331	11381
Total	1435	44171
III. XXI*st Corps.*		
52nd Division	349	10675
54th Division	340	11147
75th Division	295	9227
Composite Force	170	3710
Total	1154	34759
Grand Total	100,199	

* Infantry and mounted regiments only.

APPENDIX II.

Copy No.....

EXTRACTS FROM FORCE ORDER NO. 54, BY GENERAL SIR EDMUND ALLENBY, K.C.B.,

Commander-in-Chief, Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

Reference maps:— GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,
PALESTINE 1/20,000. *22nd October*, 1917.
PALESTINE 1/63,300.

1. (Intelligence will be issued periodically.)

2. It is the intention of the Commander-in-Chief to take the offensive against the enemy at Gaza and at Beersheba, and, when Beersheba is in our hands, to make an enveloping attack on the enemy's left flank in the direction of Sheria and Hareira.

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3. (*a*) On Zero day, the XXth Corps (with the 10th Division and Imperial Camel Brigade attached), and the Desert Mounted Corps (less one Mounted Division and the Imperial Camel Brigade) will attack the enemy at Beersheba with the object of gaining possession of that place by nightfall.

(*b*) As soon as Beersheba is in our hands, and the necessary arrangements have been made for the restoration of the Beersheba water supply, the XXth Corps and the Desert Mounted Corps will move rapidly forward to attack the left of the enemy's main position, with the object of driving him out of Sheria and Hareira and enveloping the left flank of his army. The XXth Corps will move against the enemy's defences south of Sheria, first of all against the "Kauwukah" line, and then against Sheria and the Hareira defences. The Desert Mounted Corps, calling up the division left in General Reserve during the Beersheba operation, will move north of the XXth Corps to gain possession of Nejile, and of any water supplies between that place and the right of the XXth Corps, and will be prepared to act vigorously against and round the enemy's left flank, if he should throw it back to oppose the advance of the XXth Corps.

(*c*) On a date to be subsequently determined, and which will probably be after the occupation of Beersheba, and 24 to 48 hours before the attack of the XXth Corps on the Kauwukah line, the XXIst Corps will attack the south-western defences of Gaza with the object of capturing the enemy's front line system from Umbrella Hill to Sheikh-Hasan, both inclusive.

(*d*) The Royal Navy will co-operate with the XXIst Corps in the attack on Gaza, and in any subsequent operation that may be undertaken by the XXIst Corps.

4. (*a*) On Z–4 day the G.O.C. XXIst Corps will open a systematic bombardment of the Gaza defences, increasing in volume from Z–7 day to Z–4 day at least.

(*b*) (*c*) (Details of naval co-operation.)

5. (*a*) The XXth Corps will move into position during the night Z–1 Zero, so as to attack the enemy at Beersheba on Zero day south of the Wadi Saba with two divisions, while covering his flank, and the construction of the railway east of Shellal, with one division on the high ground overlooking Wadis El-Sufi and Hannafish. The objective of the XXth Corps will be the enemy's works west and south-west of Beersheba as far as the Khalasa-Beersheba road, inclusive.

(*b*) The Desert Mounted Corps will move on the night Z–1 Zero from the area of concentration about Khalasa and Asluj, so as to co-operate with the XXth Corps by attacking Beersheba with two divisions and one mounted brigade. The object of the Desert Mounted Corps will be the enemy's defences from the south-east to the north-east of Beersheba and the town of Beersheba itself.

6. The G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps will endeavour to turn the enemy's left with a view to breaking down his resistance at Beersheba as quickly as possible. With this in view, the main weight of his force will be directed against Beersheba from the east. As soon as the enemy's resistance shows signs of weakening, G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps will be prepared to act with the utmost vigour against his retreating troops, so as to prevent their escape, or, at least, to drive them well

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beyond the high ground immediately overlooking the town from the north. He will also be prepared to push troops rapidly into Beersheba, in order to protect from damage any wells and plant connected with the water supply not damaged by the enemy before Beersheba is entered. Special instructions will be issued to G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps, and a copy of these instructions will be forwarded for information to G.O.C. XXth Corps.

7. The Yeomanry Mounted Division will pass from the command of G.O.C. XXth Corps, at 0500 on Zero day, and will come directly under General Headquarters as part of the General Reserve in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief.

8. When Beersheba has been taken, G.O.C. XXth Corps will push forward covering troops to the high ground north of the town to protect it from any counter-movement on the part of the enemy. He will also immediately put in hand the restoration of the water supply in Beersheba. G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps will be responsible for the protection of the town from the north-east. . . . . (Line of demarcation . . . . .)

9. As soon as possible after the taking of Beersheba, G.O.C. Desert Mounted Corps will report to General Headquarters on the water supplies in the *wadis* west of Beersheba, and especially along the Wadi Saba and the Beersheba-Tel-el-Milah road . . . . A preliminary survey having been made, G.O.C. XXth Corps will report by wire to General Headquarters on the condition of the wells and water supply generally in Beersheba, and on any water supplies found west and north-west of that place. He will telegraph an estimate, as soon as it can be made, of the time required to place the Beersheba water supply in working order.

10. When the situation as regards the water at Beersheba has become clear, so that the movement of the XXth Corps and Desert Mounted Corps against the left flank of the enemy's main position can be arranged, G.O.C. XXIst Corps will be ordered to attack the enemy's defences south-west of Gaza, in time for this operation to be carried out prior to the attack of the XXth Corps on the Kauwukah line of works. The objective of the XXIst Corps will be the defences at Gaza from Umbrella Hill, inclusive, to the sea about Sheikh Hasan.

11. Artillery (ammunition supply and expenditure).

12. Aircraft.

13. Communications—(*a*) with Royal Navy ; (*b*) towards Beersheba.

14. Maps.

15. Liaison.

16. Medical (three Casualty Clearing Stations at Imara, and two at Deir-el-Belah. Former to be sited, but no tents to be erected until after sunset on Z-1 day).

17. Prisoners of War.

18. Issue of Official Time.

19. The date of Zero will be notified in due course.

20. General Headquarters will remain in its present position.

(Signed) L. G. Bols, *Major-General.*
Chief of the General Staff, Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

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APPENDIX III.

ORDERS OF BATTLE, SEPTEMBER, 1918.

(*Abridged.*)

(*a*) EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Commander-in-Chief: Sir Edmund Allenby.

XX*th Corps.*
10th, 53rd, 60th Divisions.

XXI*st Corps.*
54th, 3rd (Lahore), 7th (Meerut), 75th Divisions.
Détachement Français de Palestine et Syrie.
Distaccamento Italiano di Palestina.

Desert Mounted Corps.
4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions.
Australian Mounted Division.
Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division.

Palestine Lines of Communication.

(*b*) TURKISH FORCES (YILDERIM ARMY GROUP).

Commander-in-Chief: General der Kavallerie, Liman von Sanders.

IV*th Army* (*2nd and 8th Corps*).
Composite Division, 48th Division, 24th Division.

VII*th Army* (*3rd and 20th Corps*).
1st, 11th, 26th and 53rd Divisions.

VIII*th Army* (*22nd and Asia Corps*).
7th, 16th, 19th, 20th and 46th Divisions.

Cavalry.
3rd Cavalry Division, 2nd Caucasian Cavalry Brigade.
3 German squadrons.
2 Machine-gun Companies.

The German Asia Corps consisted of 3 German infantry battalions, 4 batteries, and detachments of Engineers and technical troops.

APPENDIX IV.

Secret and personal *Copy No.* 2.

Z/96/16.

Instruction to General Officer Commanding Desert Mtd. Corps.

(*Reference Force Order No.* 68, *dated* 9. 9. 18.)

1. The General Officer Commanding XXIst Corps has been entrusted with the task of breaking down the enemy's resistance in the coastal plain and opening the way for your Corps to cross the Nahr Falik and

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the Khez Zerkiyeh Marsh. In view of the long marches which you have to make, and the necessity of conserving your full strength to carry out the important *rôle* assigned to you in the enemy's rear, you must on no account allow your troops to be drawn into the infantry fight south of the Nahr Falik, nor, after the passage of this stream, to be diverted from your objective by the presence of hostile troops in the Tulkeram-Kulunsaweh-et-Tireh area, which will be dealt with by the XXIst Corps. The advance of your Corps from its positions of readiness will be regulated by the progress of the XXIst Corps, and you will be responsible for arranging that the line Khez Zerkyen-Mouth of the Nahr Falik is crossed at the earliest possible moment. In your approach march care must be taken that there is no interference with the movement of units and formations of the XXIst Corps engaged in the attack. It is particularly important that the fire of the Corps Artillery should not be masked.

2. Should any portion of the enemy's force retreat in the direction of Haifa, you will detach only sufficient troops to keep touch with it and protect your line of communications, as it is vital that as large a proportion of your force as possible should be available to carry out the *rôle* assigned to you, which is to place your troops about El Afuleh and Beisan, where the enemy's railway communications can be cut at their most vital point, and whence you will be in a position to strike his columns if they endeavour to escape in a northerly or north-easterly direction. The action of your troops must be characterized by the greatest vigour and rapidity, as it is essential that they should reach El Afuleh and Beisan before the enemy can withdraw his rolling-stock and material or assemble troops for the defence of the railway.

3. On arrival at El Lejjun, you will detach a Brigade to block the roads and railways passing through Jenin and to gain touch with the Cavalry Brigade attached to the XXIst Corps, which will be directed on Jenin from the south if the situation permits.

4. From El Afuleh, a detachment will be sent to seize the road and railway bridges over the Jordan at Jisr Mejamie, moving by the road through Nein, Endor and Siren (1/250,000 map). The railway bridge should be prepared for demolition, but not destroyed, so long as we are able to hold it.

5. Demolitions on the railway should be limited to such as can be easily repaired.

6. Please acknowledge.

(Signed) L. J. Bols, *Major-General*,

Chief of the General Staff, Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

G.H.Q., E.E.F.

9th September, 1918.

Copies to G.O.C. XXth Corps: G.O.C. XXIst Corps, for information.

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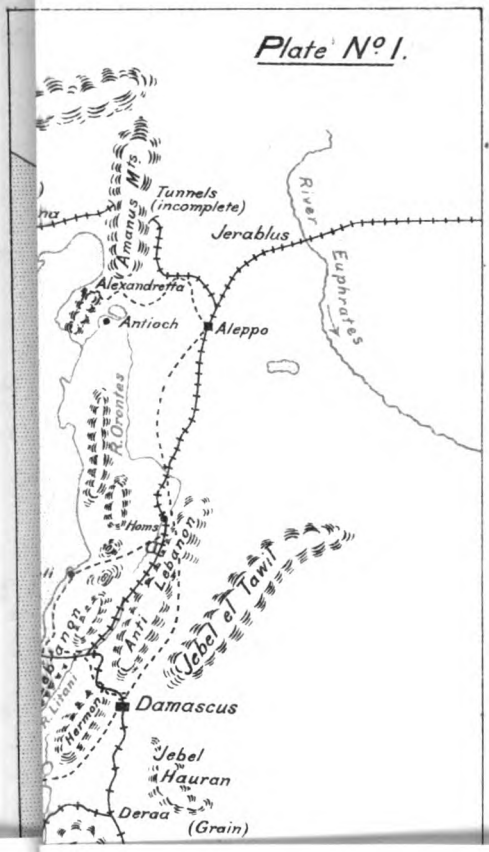

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Map No. 325

Plate 2.

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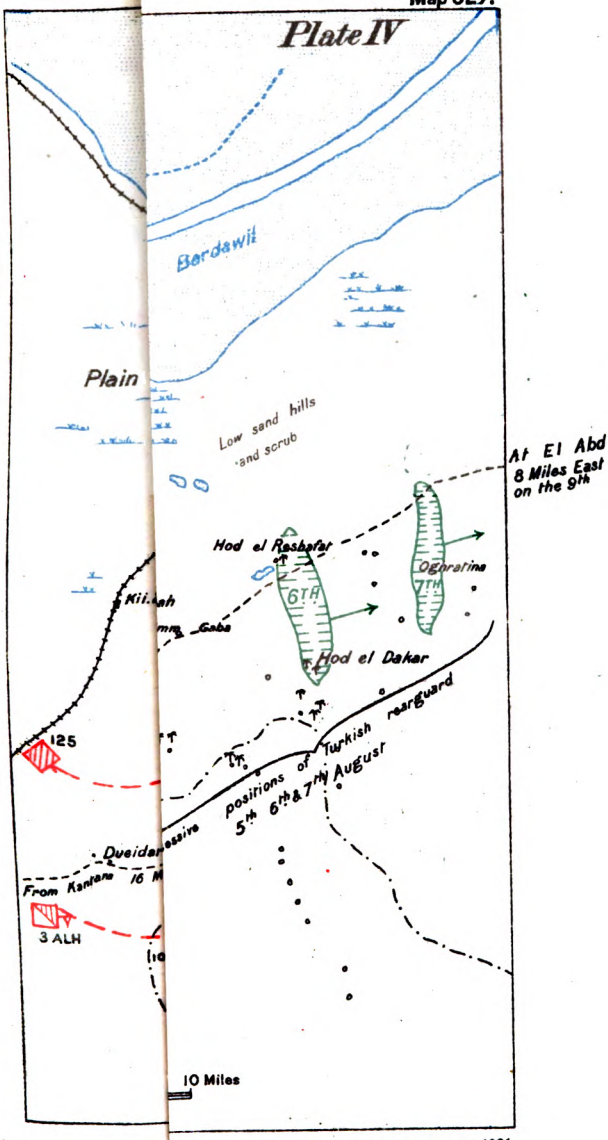
Map 327.



Ordnance Survey. January 1921.

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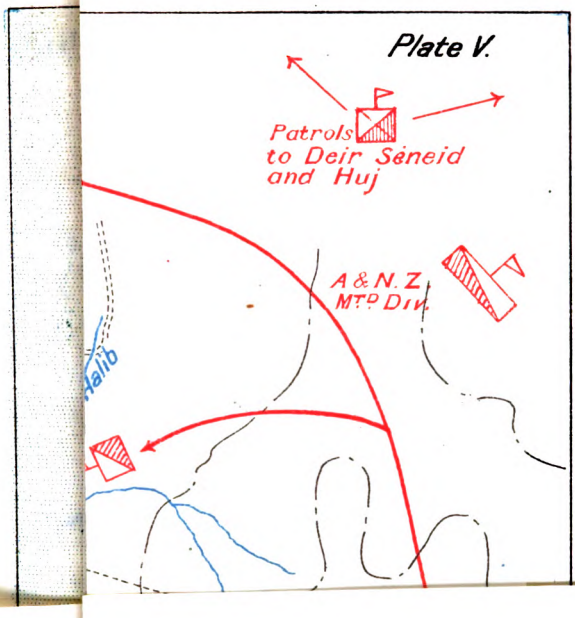

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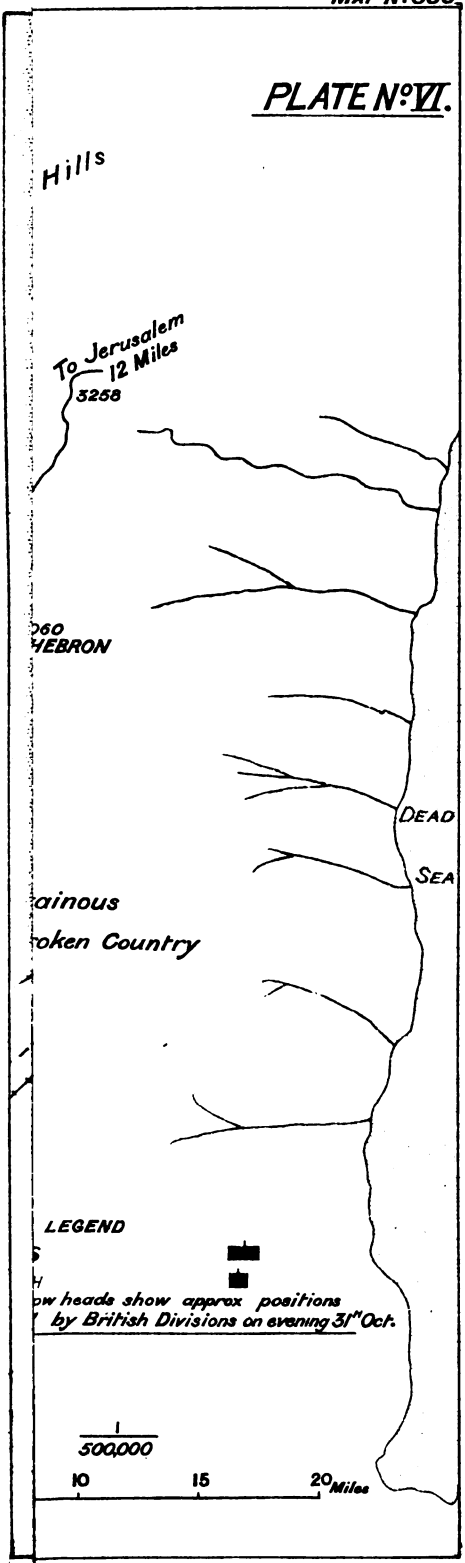
PLATE No. VI.



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MAP Nº 330

SITUATION OFFENSIVE

PLATE Nº VIII

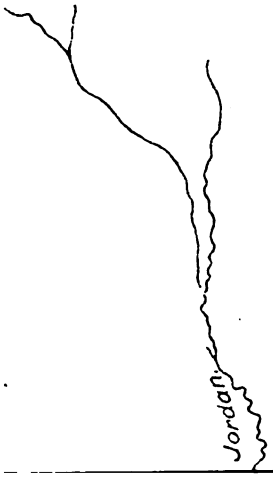

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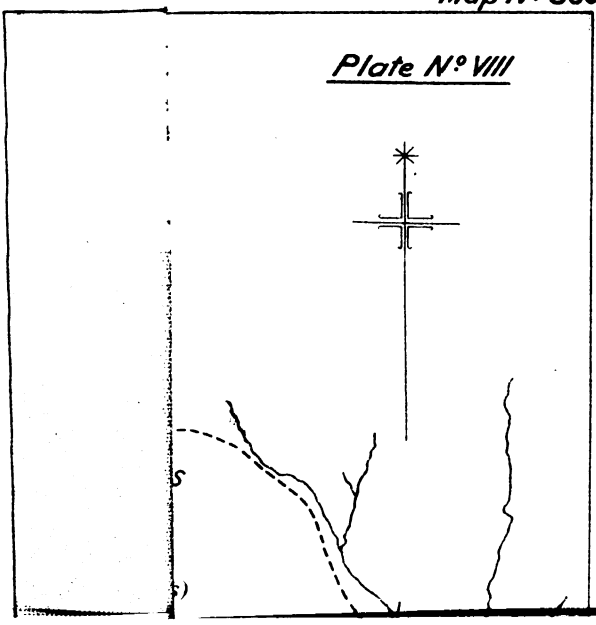
Plate No. VIII



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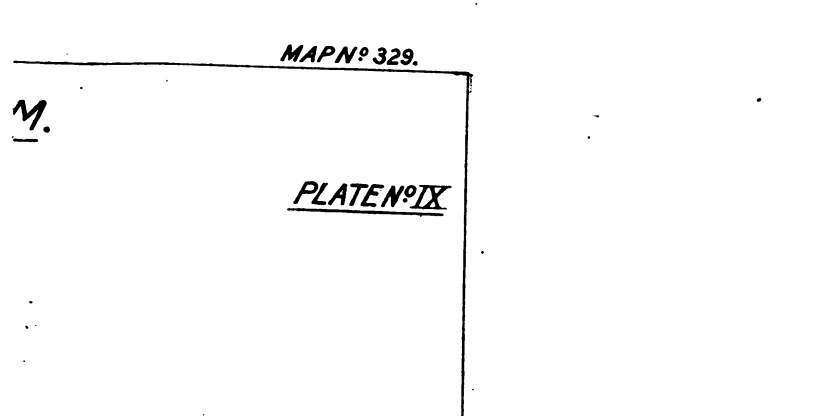

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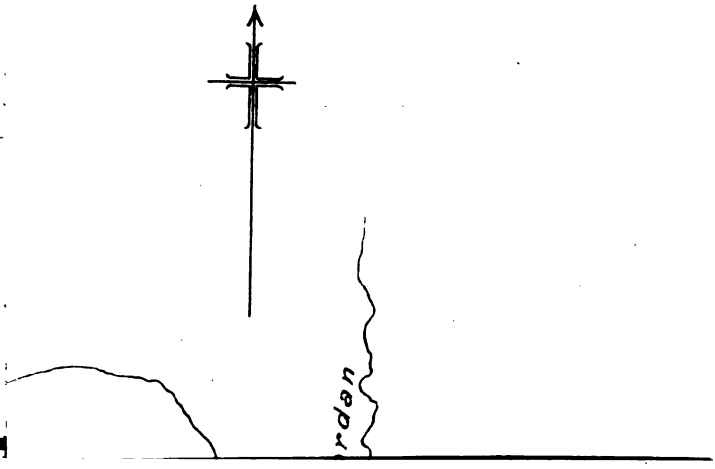
Plate X

1917.

ASSAULTS.



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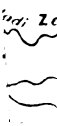

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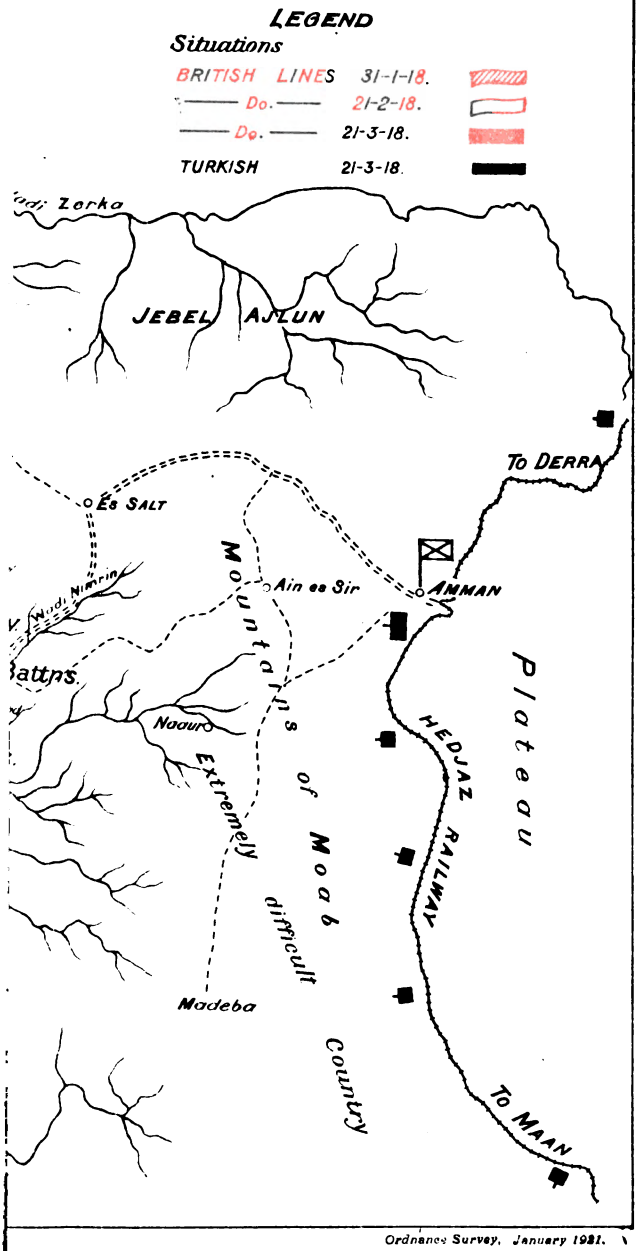
MAP Nº331

ALLEY.

PLATE Nº XI.



Ordnance Survey, January 1921.

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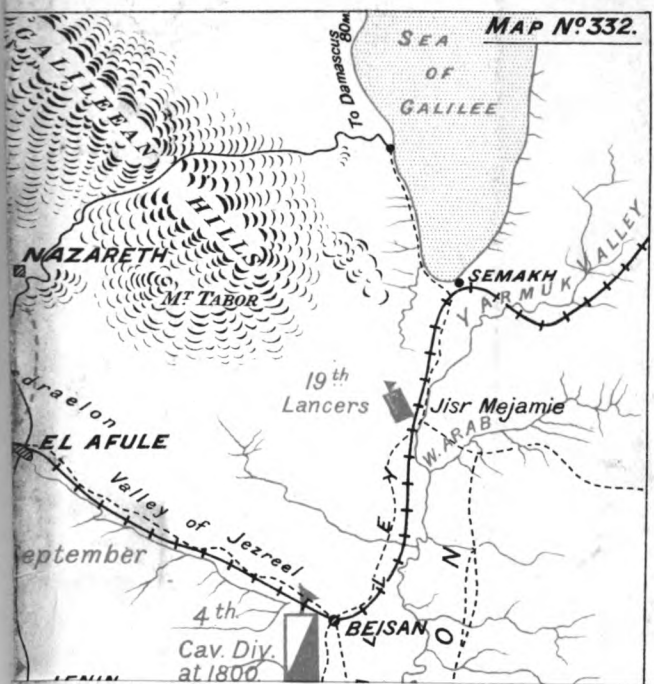
MAP Nº 332.
SEA OF GALILEE
To Damascus
GALILEAN HILLS
NAZARETH
Mt TABOR
SEMAKH
YARMUK VALLEY
19th Lancers
Jisr Mejamie
W. ARAB
EL AFULE
Valley of Jezreel
JORDAN VALLEY
4th Cav. Div. at 1800
BEISAN

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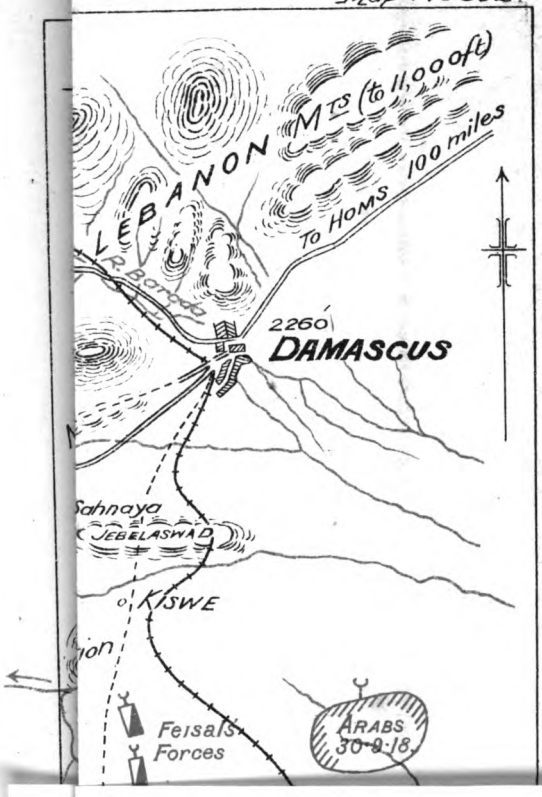
Map No 332.



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71 418 AA A 30

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